ハイスクールD×D

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24

校外学習のグリムリッパー

ファンタジア文庫

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Life.0

Life.1 Bursting into Summer!

Life.2 The God of Death and the Dog of the Blade

Life.3 The Truth of the Cats, and the Beginning of the Game

Team member

My Princess

Slash.1 Behind the Game —Sekiryuutei and Slash Dog's United Front—

Life.4 Vasco Strada and Crom Cruach [1]

Fist and Fangs

Absolute Demise. Ice Princess

Slash.2 Slash Dog/Dog God of the Fallen

Life.5 The Death God and the Hyoudou Family's Breast Technique

New Life

Artificial Transcendental

Secret Talks

Afterword

High School DxD

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by Ichiei Ishibumi

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ハイスクールDxD

24

校外学習のグリムリッパー

キャラクターデザイン

刃狗 スラッシュ・ドッグ チーム

幾瀬鳶雄 いくせとびお & 刃 ジン

神滅具「黒刃の狗神（ケイニス・リュカリオン）」無数の刃を操り、立ちはだかる敵をすべて切り裂く漆黒の狗

刃

禁手 夜天光の乱刃狗神

バランス・ブレイカー ナイト・セレスティアル・スラッシュ・ドッグズ

幾瀬鳶雄

「刃狗（スラッシュ・ドッグ）」チームリーダーで、「D×D」の一員としてもイッセーの戦いを支える青年。「堕天の狗神-SLASHDØG-」の主人公

(Right to left reading order) – Character Design. Slash Dog Team. Ikuse Tobio and Jin. Longinus [Canis Lykaon] – A jet-black dog that manipulates a countless number of sharp blades to cut down all enemies who stand before it. Balance Breaker Night Celestial Slash Dogs. Ikuse Tobio – Leader of the Slash Dog team, and a youth who supports Issei in battle as a member of [DxD]. The protagonist of Dog God of the Fallen —SLASHDØG—

—There is always a God who feels pain because of the peace that [DxD] protects.

LIFE.0

"Ise, I should be first right? Because I'm your fiancée."

"Ara, Rias. I'm also engaged to Ise-kun. Husband-sama, you'll rub some suntan oil on for me right? Of course, I'd also like to apply some on my husband-sama first."

"I'm also your fiancée! Help me apply it!"

"Hey, Xenovia! Don't try to sneak ahead! Darling! Help me put some suntan oil on!"

"Ah! Regardless of whether it's Rias-oneesama or Xenovia-san and the others, all of you are so fast! Ah, my Lord! Please give me courage!"

"Everyone! I can understand your feelings, but please make a line! I'll do it in order! A-Also, there'll be a time limit because I want to have it applied on me as well!"

"Although I'm not your fiancée, I'm your servant, so I should have the right, plus I do need sunscreen in order to protect my skin!"

Dear grandfather in Heaven. We decided to come to Kuoh Academy's pool in summer. The girls wearing their swimsuits in front of me (Rias, Akeno-san, Xenovia, Irina, Asia, Ravel, Rossweisse-san) had me surrounded whilst holding small bottles in their hands. When I began high school, I never once imagined that anything like this would have happened—. —I reported the situation to my grandfather who had passed away while at Kuoh Academy's pool with everyone…. Just like last year, we were cleaning the pool again. Afterwards once again, we were able to bask in the pool before it officially opened. After all, the Student Council President Xenovia

and Occult Research Club President Asia shared the same opinion, and so we were able to enjoy the pool just like we did last year. The graduates Rias and Akeno-san were also present, so that could be described as proof of their love! Well, compared to last year, the dream of applying suntan lotion on the girls is even livelier…. Last year it was only Rias and Akeno-san, but there are actually seven people this year to keep me busy! Ah, the seven pairs of oppai in front of my eyes bounced and swayed about in every direction, and the eye candy was truly a feast for my eyes, but I still had to choose the first person! My gaze drifted from Rias' oppai to Akeno-san's oppai to Asia, Xenovia, Irina, Ravel and then Rossweisse-san, and then back to Rias and then Akeno-san…I looked around over and over, and then all of a sudden, Rias took off the bra of her swimsuit! Although I've appreciated their bare delight many times, it isn't tiring to see such delightful and large oppai!

"The first to make a move wins. That's why I'm first."

Rias advocated that the first person to strip won, so she grabbed my hand and gave me the small bottle of suntan oil…. After seeing this, all of the other girls took off their swimsuit bras!

"I see, if I don't take this off first, then it doesn't even count as standing on the same battlefield!"

Xenovia swiftly removed her bra while Akeno-san sent me a bold smile as she presented her oppai in front of me!

"Ufufu, how interesting."

Xenovia pulled on my free hand as she said

"In that case, we'll continue from last year! Let's continue the baby making practice that we were unable to finish in the storage room

last year! I'm already your fiancée, so we can just let loose and do it without any concerns!"

What a radical remark! Her oppai swayed back and forth while she said such things. This made me recall the events of last year and a nosebleed immediately sprayed out from my nose! W-Well, we are already engaged, so I guess there will be that kind of stuff, and I do also want to have an even better relationship with Xenovia than last year! Both Irina and Rossweisse-san were also shocked by Xenovia's declaration.

"Eh!? Something like that happened!? I really want to know what happened last year!"

"Unbelievable! Something like that actually happened at this pool before I arrived…! As a teacher, I should be angry, but as one of Ise-kun's servants…uh, I'm just too envious…!"

Xenovia tugged on my hand as she said to those two

"Well, you two should also join! If all of our team members are in the storage room, we should make babies together! Don't just stand there like that, Asia and Ravel, come over as well! All members of our team should practice baby making in the storage room!"

Asia and Ravel were extremely shocked.

"I don't want to be left outside! I…also want to join the practice!"

"P-Please wait! I think this is okay, but it'll be completely full if this many people enter the storage room! But, we should go in first and then decide!"

Asia-chan and my manager didn't have any objections to making babies either!? Completely disregarding my shock, the girls of the

[Hyoudou Issei] team pushed me towards the storage room! Xenovia and Irina firmly held on to each of my arms, leaving me with no room to resist! Aaaahh, I could feel the softness of their oppai on my arms! Their snow-white skin was incredibly smooth! The oppai of those two had their own elasticity and softness; these exquisite differences allowed me to feel the very personality of their oppai! If this continued, I would enter the storage room with this many people, and then we would continue on from last year!? T-That's also great! But I'm also rather concerned about the follow-up of this! However, someone embraced me from behind! An incredible softness pressed against me from behind! Rias hugged me from behind and prevented me from going into the storage room!

"Hold on, all of you! He's my servant, and also the son-in-law of the House of Gremory! I won't allow you to take my fiancée away and do erotic things with him there!"

And then Akeno-san also joined the battle by snatching my arm away from Xenovia and tightly clinging onto it!

"Exactly. He's my husband-sama! I won't allow you to silently lead him astray!"

As graduates, the older pair composed of Rias and Akeno-san had already given up their prestige as seniors, and they began to compete with Xenovia and the others as equal women! Seeing Rias and Akeno-san refusing to back down, I felt that the actions and expressions of those two were incredibly cute. Am I being too sinful!? But Xenovia didn't retreat either as a one of the current students.

"Master Rias! Since it's a rare opportunity to have a pool opening, how about we have a battle to decide who gets to have Ise?"

Irina stood beside Xenovia. Seeing this, Rias and Akeno-san looked at each other and showed joyful smiles.

“You’re right. Since it’s summer, we should heat things up.”

Rias stood on top of a diving block, while Xenovia stood on the diving block next to hers! And then, Ravel said

“It’s a contest! Please leave it to me!”

As she took on the role of a referee from the side.

“On your marks! Get ready…start!”

Following Ravel’s shout, Rias and Xenovia dived into the water! They kept their bare oppai exposed whilst swimming! Like this, a swimming contest began with the team combinations of Rias + Akeno-san and Xenovia + Irina! Asia and Rossweisse-san cheered for them from the sidelines! …And I was left behind…ah, it’s fine, I’ll still end up rubbing on suntan oil in the end, so I guess it’s fine to use this to decide the order? Otherwise, I definitely would’ve been dragged along and I wouldn’t have been able to apply oil on them…. When it comes to things like this, I’m not sure if they’re just compromising, or if they just really get along with each other. …Anyway, the storage room thing was certainly very interesting! I’d really like a continuation of last year! Could it be possible to ask them to decide the order again after applying suntan oil for a continuation of last year in the storage room!? I sat at the edge of the pool and sighed while feeling a bit of regret…. The people who came to the pool today were centred around those who lived at the Hyoudou residence. Kunou, Ophis, Lilith, Le Fay and Lint-san had also come as well.

“Phis-dono, Lith-dono! Here I go!”

Kunou (school swimsuit) threw the beach ball towards Ophis and Lilith who were in the pool.

“I, catch the ball.”

“Ball ball.”

The Dragon God sisters (also wearing school swimsuits) raised their hands as they joyfully played with the ball. Meanwhile, Gasper and Valerie were happily chatting with each other under a beach umbrella. Kiba…was quietly swimming by himself. From freestyle he switched to butterfly, and he blissfully swam on his own. As for Lint-san, she wore a hoodie on top of her swimsuit and sat on top of a diving block while watching the surface of the pool. …The parts that were exposed complemented her bold swimsuit very well! Nakiri had something else to do and wasn’t here. And Bova said that he had to stay at home to keep watch. Elmenhilde didn’t come either. It would be too much to ask of a pure-blooded Vampire princess to come here on a hot and sunny summer’s day, so it was a pity, but she was currently waiting in the club room at the old school building. Le Fay sat across from me while she looked at Ophis, Lilith and the others play with the ball. Tosca, who came along with Kiba was cheering him on from the sidelines. It was a much livelier pool opening than it was last year. Well, in this past year, I’ve really gained a lot of comrades. I felt comfortable and pleased by the fact that the pool seemed to have become smaller. Rias and Xenovia had devoted themselves fully to their swimming contest, and I had long been forgotten as they immersed themselves in the joy of the competition. It was truly a peaceful day. I really hoped that it could just continue like this forever…. Just don’t forget about the oil rubbing afterwards, everyone! Just as I was immersed in such thoughts, a sudden feeling of pleasure and fulfilment touched my

back! In other words, someone was hugging me from behind! As I turned my head around, Kuroka's face was right in front of mine.

"Ufufu ♪ I'll slot myself in while everyone's busy competing nya."

"K-Kuroka!"

Kuroka licked my face. It felt so comfortable that my entire body quivered. Kuroka kept herself close to me and she used both of her hands to play with my body. She traced her fingers gently up and down my chest and abdomen…an erotic sensation was building up! —Mmm! And then I noticed. I could feel a slippery slather of liquid. When I turned around, I noticed that the part of Kuroka that was in contact with me and all of the areas that Kuroka had touched were covered in suntan oil. S-She already covered her body in oil?

Kuroka said to me with a tempting smile.

"It's already way too late for you to help me with applying oil nya. —When my entire body is covered in oil like this, I can actually help you put it on like this nya ♪"

After saying that, Kuroka moved her body around me! My back, arms, legs and neck could constantly feel the sensation of Kuroka's body as she shared her suntan oil with me, leaving behind a soft and slippery feeling! Kuroka, she's not wearing a bra! I could feel the sensation of her nude oppai against me! Her oppai were soaked with oil, and she moved them around against my body over and over again! She used her body which was covered in oil…to continue giving me this mysterious experience! Kuroka's soft oppai pressed against me while she held me from behind, and she entangled her

arms and legs which were covered in the slippery oil around my body…! She also licked the back of my neck gently with her tongue!

"Ohh!"

At last, I couldn't help but let out a moan! This is way too erotic! I can't resist at all!

"Ufufu, this seems to have a tremendous effect on you, Sekiryuutei-chan. Your expression is irresistible ♪"

Kuroka's hands slid across various parts of my body until—. A girl who silently grabbed onto Kuroka's hand appeared. —It was Koneko-chan.

"……"

The cheeks of her face had puffed up like two balloons, and she looked rather angry. Unlike last year, Koneko-chan wasn't wearing a school swimsuit, but a cute white one-piece swimsuit instead. Kuroka smiled as she glanced at her younger sister.

"Arara, are you challenging me? ♪"

"Kuroka-neesama, stealing Ise-senpai is against the rules. You have to decide on the order like Rias-neesama or Xenovia-senpai first."

"Eh—, stuff like that is too much trouble nya. If there's a gap then I'll take it, that's my style nya ♪"

Kuroka stuck her tongue out and intended to push the matter aside, but that only seemed to make Koneko-chan even angrier. The day when Koneko-chan and Kuroka's respective teams would confront each other was approaching. Perhaps this was the reason why they always seemed to be in confrontation mode in their

everyday life. Kuroka still rubbed her body against mine erotically, and pleadingly said to me

"Hey, Sekiryuutei-chan. Shirone is bullying me. Help mee. Otherwise, we can head over to the changing room over there."

Upon hearing Kuroka say that, Koneko-chan's eyebrows rose.

"…Kuroka-neesama, what are you planning to do by taking Ise-senpai into the changing room?"

"It's *that*, right? How about we keep getting intense and sticky after this? Hey, Sekiryuutei-chan."

In the store room with Xenovia and the others! In the changing room with Kuroka! So that's how it can be done! I committed these new usages of the pool into my memory! —And then, I said to Kuroka

"H-Hey, by the way, Kuroka. I can't really get used to the way you call me 'Sekiryuutei-chan' right now…"

"Ara, is that it?"

Kuroka seemed slightly confused. Since we were living together, we weren't unfamiliar with each other. Vali also called me 'Hyoudou Issei', but up until now, Kuroka still called me 'Sekiryuutei'.

"Everyone calls me 'Ise'…I think it's better to call me that if we're living together."

After hearing me say that, a flash of surprise appeared on Kuroka's face…and then she revealed a very pleasant smile.

"I see nya~. …That's right, maybe it is a good time to think about that."

Kuroka nodded while saying so. And at that time, Ravel's voice echoed over

"Ah! Kuroka-sama! You're sneaking ahead again! If you don't follow the rules, it's rude to all of your seniors, and it also disturbs the order!"

After noticing what Kuroka was doing, Ravel rushed over. Upon seeing Ravel, Kuroka revealed a mischievous smile as she separated from me.

"—The scary manager-san is here so I'll retreat nya. Ufufu, Shirone! I'm looking forward to our game nya ♪"

Kuroka made a transportation magic circle and then quickly left—.

"Geez, Kuroka-sama is still the same. …Has she always been like this?"

Ravel sighed as she asked Koneko-chan.

"Mmm, she's always been like that."

I see, so that's how she always was. It's no wonder that Koneko-chan is always so serious. Of course, she's also been influenced by Rias a lot. —Just as these thoughts streamed through my mind, Gasper ran towards Koneko-chan with teary eyes.

"K-Koneko-chan! Valerie fainted from the heat!"

Looking over, I could see that Valerie had fainted underneath one of the umbrellas in the distance. I didn't expect that even Daywalkers couldn't stand the heat!

"…Okay, Gya-kun. Let's move her into the room."

Koneko-chan immediately responded and began walking towards Valerie. I said to Ravel

"…Sure enough, both Koneko-chan and Kuroka are quite wary of each other because the game is approaching."

"That is also understandable. These sisters who used to have various conflicts must now confront each other in this form…"

I didn't think that Koneko-chan was still afraid of Kuroka as she was in the past, they seemed to have become sisters who had a good relationship with each other…but there were probably still some complicated feelings between them. While thinking about the nekomata sisters by myself, a small communications magic circle appeared by Ravel's ear to inform her of new information. After listening to the news, she couldn't help but express her surprise.

"Eh! Rias-sama, t-this is no good!"

Rias also seemed to have received the information as she stopped swimming and looked rather surprised.

"How could this be!? Why didn't I know about this beforehand!?"

I approached the flustered Rias and asked about the situation.

"What happened?"

Rias supported her forehead with one hand as she replied

"…My parents seem to have arrived at the Hyoudou residence. Also, Ravel's mother and Akeno's father have arrived as well…in any case, everyone involved seems to have gathered in one place."

—What! Is this for real!? Rias' parents, Ravel's mother, and even Barakiel-san have come to my house!? Ravel then added on the new information that she had received.

"Sister Griselda-sama and Irina-sama's parents are also coming!"

[Eeeeeeeeeeh!?]

Xenovia and Irina both exclaimed simultaneously. As the children of those people, all of us cried out in surprise as well! Although summer had only just begun, it seemed like a lot of things were going to happen.

LIFE.1 BURSTING INTO SUMMER!

Part 1

After receiving this sudden news, we halted our pool activities and frantically rushed back home to the Hyoudou residence. In the living room at home, my parents, Rias' parents, Ravel's mother, Barakiel-san and Sister Griselda-san had already gathered together! Upon seeing our arrival, Rias' father raised his hand with a hearty smile as he greeted us.

"Come, everyone."

All of us were so shocked to see our own parents that we were completely speechless…! As soon as Rias opened her mouth to say 'Otou—', she was interrupted by a woman who came over to my side. A woman with black hair who bore a close resemblance to Irina approached me—. She took my hand, and then smiled.

"Ara ara ara ara, Ise-kun. It's been so long since I last saw you! Although I've been watching your games on television, but you really have grown up so much now that I look at you up close like this!"

I seemed to have some kind of recollection of this amiable woman. And then, Irina stood in between us and then said to the woman

"Mama! Why are you here!? You said you were coming to Japan! But why here!?"

That's right, the woman that Irina was talking to was her mother! Irina's mother answered with a somewhat absentminded expression

“Ara, didn’t I tell you?”

The way she tilted her head was exactly the same as Irina. I greeted Irina’s mother properly

“It’s just as I thought, oba-san [1]! It has been a long time.”

It really had been a long time since I had last seen her. Ever since Irina and her family moved to England. I had always been in her care ever since I was young. She would often treat me to lunch, and she would also take me and Irina to the department store or to a hero show.

“Golly! You’ve really become such a wonderful man! When you were a child, I had half-jokingly said that Irina would be looked after by you in the future, but I didn’t expect that you’d actually marry her! Regardless of whether my grandchildren are boys or girls, it’s okay with me!”

Her high-spirited nature was just like Irina! And she also felt like a second mother to me, so I really missed that! Irina’s face turned red because of her mother’s words, and she murmured with embarrassment

“Please stop! We’re in front of everyone!”

I also felt rather embarrassed and my face felt like it was on fire! I really don’t know how to react when I get teased by these parental figures! So that she could better understand the situation, Rias asked her own parents

“Gathering so many people here at the Hyoudou residence…otou-sama, okaa-sama, what are you planning? Surely this is not just a tea party…”

Rias' father nodded and said

"Hmm, it's to discuss the ceremonial schedule. It's also time to arrange things according to the conditions of each family."

…….

…….

[…C-Ceremony?]

None of us could understand what Rias' father had said. With a puzzled look, she asked her father again. Rias' father smiled pleasantly, and then cheerfully replied

"Hahaha! Isn't it obvious, Rias? We're talking about the wedding ceremony arrangements for you and all of the other ladies who have accepted Issei-kun's proposal."

…….

……

…All of us took a while to process the meaning of those words, and we fell into silence…and as soon as we understood, everyone cried out in surprise!

[W-WEDDING CEREMONY!?]

All of us shouted out in unison! H-He actually said that they were determining the dates of the wedding ceremonies! What's going on!? And it seems our parents have already agreed that they want to discuss this topic!? A-Although I have certainly already proposed to Rias, Akeno-san, Asia, Xenovia and Irina, is that enough for all of our parents to come together right now to discuss the dates!? Rias and the others also seemed completely unaware of this, and they were

so surprised that their expressions had frozen in place! Koneko-chan, Ravel, Rossweisse-san, Kiba, Gasper, and everyone else who was present were also at a loss for words. Rias' mother looked at our vacant expressions and sighed as she complained to her husband.

"My dear, if you talk about wedding ceremonies all of a sudden, the children will only get confused, right?"

After saying that, Rias' mother said to us again

"To be precise, there is still some time until the wedding ceremonies, isn't there? However, because all of you are now officially engaged, when we began to think about Issei-san and Rias' date, we thought it was a good opportunity to arrange the dates for everyone else."

After that was said, Ravel said 'I see!' as she clapped her hands to express her understanding of the situation. Rias' father also nodded in agreement with his wife.

"That's correct, if the wedding ceremonies are to be held, there must be an order. Even if they could be held together, there is still a need to consider the position of each house, which makes things more difficult, not to mention any religious considerations."

And then, tou-san said

"In that case, we have to talk about how to do it for each house. Ah — we do have to attend all of them!"

W-Well, of course, my parents would actually have to attend all of them…! I was made speechless by what they had said, and at this time, Ravel's mother placed her hand against her (ample) chest as she said

“The Phoenix House shall be responsible for overseeing the series of schedules. There are many things that can also serve as a reference for the future. Isn’t that right, Ravel?”

After hearing her own mother ask her that, Ravel acted rather surprised and her face suddenly reddened.

“O-Okaa-sama! I-I haven’t…”

“It’s only a matter of time. I will also make arrangements for you in the schedule.”

Ravel’s mother didn’t allow her to make a single retort. Leaving us on our own, our parents began to chatter away in a lively manner. Kaa-san said with a slightly troubled expression

“How troublesome…I wonder if I should wear a different dress for each ceremony…”

After hearing that, Rias’ mother said

“Ara, please leave that to the Gremory House. I’ll introduce you to various shops.”

“Oh! That will be a great help!”

Meanwhile, Akeno-san couldn’t stop trembling in excitement as she said to her own father, Barakiel-san

“Tou-sama! I want to wear a shiromuku [2].”

What are you saying Akeno-san!? I thought that accelerating the process would actually make her father angry, but Barakiel-san’s eyes actually became watery! Upon hearing his daughter’s request as a father, Barakiel-san couldn’t help but let out manly tears.

“Fuguu! Leave it to father, Akeno! I will definitely prepare you the most finest clothes! Leave it to me!”

And then Irina also stepped forward and her eyes shone brightly as she said

“Papa! Mama! I want to hold my wedding ceremony in Heaven!”

And then Irina’s father waved both of his hands in the air and said with a wide smile

“I knew you would say that, so papa already reported this to the higher-ups!”

Aaaahhh! I couldn’t keep up with the rhythm at all, but on the contrary, all of the girls and their parents seemed to be enjoying it and one by one, they conformed! Kaa-san said to Asia

“Asia-chan, you can also tell me about what venue you’d like, okay? This is the time when we can make use of the money that Ise has earned.”

“Yes, okaa-san! I-I-I want to have a wedding in Japan!”

After listening to Asia’s request, tou-san has an ecstatic expression and it seemed as though he had begun to daydream.

“Asia-chan’s wedding dress, it’ll be beautiful…”

Xenovia also sat down next to Sister Griselda-san quietly, and they began to converse.

“If you think about my origins, then surely my wedding has to be at the Vatican. What do you think?”

“Choose the place that you like. This will be your big day. I’ll listen to your choice.”

Watching the situation unfold in front of her, Rias was no longer able to stay calm, and she raised her voice as she said to her parents

“Otou-sama! Okaa-sama!”

Even Rias will mention a few complaints to her parents, I originally thought—.

“I want to hold my wedding ceremony in Kyoto!”

She somehow took out a wedding brochure from somewhere and started showing it to her parents! Seeing even Rias fall into line with everyone else, I was left completely speechless!

“I guess parents are happier than anyone else when it comes to things like this.”

—Kiba smiled wryly as he said that. And then, Ravel said

“But, just as Venelana-sama said, Ise-sama — considering that you will continue to act as the [Oppai Dragon] in the future, it is a very wise decision to decide on the schedule to some extent now. Since you’ve already proposed, it is quite natural that everyone will start to get busy with various preparations for the date.”

What Ravel said was correct. As a Devil [King] or as the [Oppai Dragon], my schedule from now on would be incredibly busy. After all, I had my Devil’s job, and I also had to attend hero events as well. Rias would also be just as busy as me. Moreover, we also had the responsibility of being a part of the anti-terrorist team [DxD]. Although everything had felt rather peaceful up until now in the Tournament, it was difficult to predict whether there would be

another madman like Rizevim who could emerge. Thinking about things like this, it was better to arrange the dates for our wedding ceremonies now, as that would probably make things slightly easier…? Kiba said

"Ise-kun, I'm sure there will be many VIP guests attending your wedding ceremonies. It's best to confirm these events as soon as possible. It's not sufficient notice to tell them to come at the last minute. But on that topic, of all the parents here, it's necessary for them to have a sense of peace in their minds."

Ah — that is also something I need to think about…. From my perspective, I had turned to the girls who were precious to me, and pledged to them from the bottom of my heart that I wanted to spend my life with them in the future. But from the perspective of their parents, since that was the case, it was necessary to prepare for the ceremonies. No, this was a major thing that I should have considered as well…. Because the situation was far beyond my imagination, even when placed in front of me as a third year student, there was nothing I could do but feel confused! Rossweisse-san seemed to realise what I was thinking, and she said to me

"Ise-kun, it's normal for you to worry. Even when you became engaged, you thought that the wedding ceremonies would be held in a few years' time, and that's why everyone is confused by the excitement of the parents. But it's only because your parents are so happy about it."

Even though I had listened to the opinions of Kiba, Ravel and Rossweisse-san, I still felt as though I had been too naïve in my thoughts. Hmm, I've already proposed to them, so I can't just go on like this. Rias and the others probably really wanted to talk to me about these things. From now on, I should talk to them about these

things, while relying on everyone's parents for guidance. That's right, since they're here, I should go to Irina's parents and Sister Griselda-san to say 'Please give me your daughter!' or 'Please give me your sister!'. I had already gained the approval of Rias' parents and Barakiel-san, so I had to make sure that I had everyone's blessing! Although I was previously quite confused, I had changed my mind now, and decided to face everything head on. —Just at that time. An enormous figure appeared in the living room—. A two metre tall body with a thick neck, thick arms, legs thicker than my waist…and the face of an elderly man that was incongruent to that body! The grey-haired giant who was wearing a priest's vestments stood right there.

"Hoho, wedding ceremonies huh. Please allow me to give my blessings at that time as a priest, as that would give me great satisfaction."

After saying that, he revealed a smile upon his wrinkled face! T-This was a man whom I couldn't forget.

"Your Eminence Strada!"

The Vatican's former Cardinal Priest, His Eminence Vasco Strada stroked my head with his large hand.

"Good day, Sekiryuutei boy. I watched your game, and I must say that it was truly a splendid match."

Astonished by his sudden appearance, both Xenovia and Irina quickly knelt down (following this, Lint-san also knelt down). To the warriors of the Church, he was their former leader…. Strada waved his hand, motioning for the three of them to stand up. T-This man was a major figure who had come to Japan from the Vatican during

the previous rebellion of the Church warriors. After taking the blame for the coup, he should have begun to live a secluded life afterwards…. Although he had given us his support during the battle against Trihexa, why did His Eminence Strada come to my house…? My team members were also very surprised — but that didn't appear to be the case for the members of Rias' team. It was only natural that the appearance of such a major figure here would cause Xenovia and Irina to feel surprised…. Ravel seemed to have understood the meaning behind His Eminence's appearance, and she looked towards Rias. Rias smiled fearlessly in acknowledgement.

"It's just as you think, Ravel. I invited His Eminence to join my team."

[—What!?]

Rias' remark completely shocked all of us! Damn it! It's been surprise after surprise! Our parents had begun to discuss wedding ceremonies in an energetic manner, and Rias' team had managed to recruit His Eminence Vasco Strada for battle! I had heard that he was already retired, so I never expected that he would participate in the World Tournament! Moreover, he joined Rias' team! Under normal circumstances, even if His Eminence was to participate, he would probably join a team that had some relation to the Church or Heaven…! What exactly did Rias do to persuade His Eminence Strada to join…? No, Rias was very good at persuasion to begin with. We had also taken been persuaded by her in the past to become her servants and gather together here! All of us were incredibly talented people. Taking into account the addition of His Eminence Strada, I guess it is quite unbelievable. B-But! I still found it difficult to believe that His Eminence Strada had joined Rias' team…! The expressions of Ravel, Xenovia and my other team members shifted from surprise to

caution. The atmosphere had shifted from the liveliness of the wedding ceremonies to the heat of the tournament. Yet the people to break this apart were Irina's father and Sister Griselda-san. The two of them also knelt down upon seeing His Eminence.

[Your Eminence.]

His Eminence Strada smiled, and then motioned with his hand for them to stand up.

"It's quite alright. Warrior Shidou Touji, Sister Griselda, please stand up. I have come here on a private occasion."

Rias' parents then also greeted His Eminence.

"It's our first meeting. Your Eminence Vasco Strada, I am the current head of the House of Gremory. This is my wife Venelana."

Ravel's mother also said her greetings

"I am the wife of the current head of the House of Phoenix. It is an honour to meet such a famous holy man today."

It was quite a striking scene to be able to see high-class Devils and a former executive of the Church in one place. If this was in the past, it would likely have turned into an unavoidable war. Barakiel-san stood up and shook His Eminence Strada's hand.

"Being able to see each other face to face like this…it has been decades."

"Hahaha, I was still a youngster back then. It's nice that you're still in good health."

The two of them know each other? Well, His Eminence Strada has been a warrior for a long time. Kiba explained to me

(His Eminence is said to have had several encounters with the Fallen Angel Cadres when he was younger.)

Ah — I recalled the story of how His Eminence had forced Kokabiel to retreat. And when Kokabiel attacked us here, he had made mention of His Eminence Strada, most likely because that incident had a great impact on him. Like this, His Eminence Strada also joined the discussion of the wedding schedule, and the talks continued—.

Sometime after the topic of wedding ceremonies was discussed, kaa-san quietly said to me

"We should also call over your grandmother in the country, but how do we explain something like this to an elderly person…"

What she just said…was rather serious. My grandmother had no idea about Devils or Youkai! Tou-san also said

"If my old man was still here, he'd probably say something like 'Oh, so they exist!' and accept it on the spot."

Ah — just as tou-san said, jii-chan would probably believe in the existence of Devils and Angels. After all, he was a rather open-minded and easy-going person. Tou-san continued

"Hmm, I think kaa-chan like to believe in such things too. For a long time, she's been the kind of person who would believe in youkai, mountain gods, and the like."

"Surprisingly, the older generation may accept such things much more quickly."

Kaa-san replied. And then Rias' father said

“—If normal people believe in the supernatural, then showing those people the supernatural beings of their own country is the most direct way. The best one would be the Kappa…but, it’s possible that the shock will be too immense…hmm.”

Rias’ father then shifted his gaze towards Koneko-chan and Kuroka (came home just earlier) who were sitting side by side on a sofa.

“Since Koneko-kun and her sister are here, it might be better to start making her feel accustomed with the nekomata. She can look at their cat ears and tails while talking about it.”

Starting with Koneko-chan and Kuroka huh. That should work. Based on appearance alone, they aren’t very different from ordinary people. Their cat ears and tail might fool some people into believing that they’re decorations, but they’re not frightening, so it seems like they’ll be able to be accepted by people more easily. I had become a Devil, and my future wives are Devils and Angels, so it will be necessary to honestly explain things with my grandmother before the wedding ceremonies. My parents also seemed a bit worried as to we would actually explain things to my grandmother. …Should I also be honest about it with Matsuda and Motohama? No, if I tell them, I may put them in danger…. But, those two guys might accept the situation immediately after the shock, and then say ‘Hurry up and introduce us to some cute Devil girls!’. Asia came over and asked me

“Ise-san, what was your ojii-sama like?”

“He was very perverted. That’s the first thing that I can think of.”

I replied without any hesitation. Hmm, not only did he have a stockpile of ero magazines, we would also chase after a beautiful

onee-san's bottom whenever we went out together. He would talk about oppai all day long. Tou-san also nodded unreservedly.

"…Yes, Ise's perversion and aim for a harem must have been an influence of my old man. After all, kaa-chan has said that he's always been chasing after girls' skirts ever since he was young."

Kaa-san then continued

"Ara, mother-in-law also told me that he still kept chasing after young girls' skirts even when he got older."

Well, grandmother told me about that too. Seeing me so lecherous despite my young age, she said I was just like grandfather. Every time I went back there to see my grandmother, she would say the same thing. I said to Asia

"Jii-chan's whole face would change if he saw a beautiful onee-san at the supermarket checkout, you know?"

And then, tou-san said to me with half-narrowed eyes

"Ise, aren't you the same? When you were young, you'd also keep your eyes glued to those beautiful women."

Your son is so sorry for being perverted! But, didn't those beautiful onee-sans also steal your gaze, tou-san!? Tou-san sighed and said

"My old man was too indulgent when he was young, and even the uncles among my relatives wondered if he would ever have any illegitimate children…. Back then, I was always afraid of having a sibling come out of nowhere."

Please stop telling those stories! If jii-chan's illegitimate children really come out, our family tree is going to be overturned!

“Hahaha, he sounds like an old man who quite enjoyed the company of a woman.”

Rias’ father listened in cheerfully. Speaking of which, all of the Devils present were now listening intently to the stories of jii-chan. It was rather convincing seeing as how I was so perverted, and the topic of illegitimate children was probably quite common among aristocratic Devils.

“Now that I think of it, I was in middle school when my old man and my classmate’s mother—”

—Tou-san began to progress deeper into the topic of my grandfather. All of the parents actually listened with great interest as they nodded along. As I looked over, Rias, Asia, Akeno-san, Xenovia, Irina, Ravel, and Rossweisse-san had all become fascinated by the story as well. …I guess stories about jii-chan were quite unusual for them. After all, that old man was rarely ever mentioned in our everyday conversations. I sighed as I got up and walked towards the kitchen. I thought of getting some juice from the refrigerator. But I didn’t expect for people to be in the kitchen already, and it turned out to be Koneko-chan and Kuroka who were sipping on a cola as they talked about the past. Kuroka quietly said

“…Parents huh.”

The expression on her face was pained, and her eyes were filled with sorrow…. She would occasionally show such a serious and beautiful expression, and I couldn’t help but feel fascinated by her. Kuroka, you’re really beautiful when you stay silent. Kuroka noticed me, and then asked

“When you marry Sekiryuutei-chan, will you still need your parents? What do you think, Shirone?”

Koneko-chan listened to Kuroka’s question—.

“……I don’t have any memories of tou-sama and kaa-sama, so…”

The tone of her voice was quite sombre. Kuroka smiled wryly.

“…That’s true. Sorry for asking you something like that, Shirone.”

“It’s okay.”

And then the two of then silently continued to sip on their cola. As the game approached, the sisters who were sometimes in opposition because of a small thing would also drink cola and sit closely side by side like this. …But, their parents huh. I’ve never once heard about it from either of them. The kitchen was occupied by a silent atmosphere, while the living room was filled with voices of laughter from everyone else. I guess the stories of jii-chan are quite interesting.

Part 2

The next day—.

Yesterday, the sudden visit of our parents and the appearance of His Eminence Strada led to the swimming pool not being completely cleaned…. At a later date, we would have to clean the pool again, but on second thought, my house also had an underground swimming pool (and it was bigger than the school’s), so there was no real need to rush over to the school to swim. In case anything happened, it was also possible to swim in the pool underneath my house…. But if we went swimming at school, then it would be possible to rub on some

suntan oil and bask under the sun…. But, Devils and Vampires putting on sunscreen at the poolside so that they can bathe in the sun is a rather strange idea. While such thoughts streamed through my mind, I went out shopping with Ravel after school. Because the consumables in our club room had been depleted, we planned to replenish them at a nearby supermarket. After we finished shopping, and we were on the way back, Ravel and I spoke about the future direction of the World Tournament.

"His Eminence Strada will join Rias' team…. This is quite unexpected, and we never even considered such a possibility."

I said the truth. As the former wielder of Durandal, he was a major figure who had led the Church warriors—. His true strength was certain, and despite his age, he still had enough power to overwhelm us. Although his physical strength had weakened somewhat due to his advanced age…his participation was still a threat. Rias' team members could all be considered to be first-rate. Ravel said

"In this way, Rias-sama's team is now complete in terms of members…all of her members are considerably strong. Her original members are strong, and they will grow in the future as well, but she was also drawn in two Longinus wielders, the Evil Dragon Crom Cruach, and His Eminence Vasco Strada…they're too strong. As comrades, they're worth boasting about, but as opponent's, it's rather scary."

That was absolutely true. From our normal point of view, we felt rather impressed by Rias' negotiation skills, but in terms of the World Tournament, it was quite terrifying. Crom Cruach might have already surpassed Heavenly Dragon class, and on top of that, there's His Eminence Strada as well…. Although it might not be possible for His Eminence Strada to move around for too long due to his age, that is

just one of his weaknesses, he is still a terrifying person nonetheless. Ravel said

"…I think it is imperative for us to strengthen the line-up of our team, and Ise-sama, your Dragon Deification still needs an evolution that is better than a partial transformation."

In other words, Dragon Deification has to last longer than ten seconds. Indeed, I have considered that…. But this isn't something that can be solved immediately just by training. The Dragon God Ophis originally helped me with it, so I have a feeling that I'll be able to gain progress as long as there's something related to a God…. I began to feel worried about the vast number of tasks that I had to complete, but Ravel suddenly said

"Ise-sama, the Prince of the Asura gods has won yet another game."

"Yeah, Mahabali-san's team is incredibly strong. If we have to face them, it'll definitely be a tough battle."

Indeed, among the god-class teams that we were concerned with right now, one of them was Mahabali-san's team. He was the god who had met with me along with Shiva at my high-class Devil promotion ceremony. He had been moving forward at full speed ever since the World Tournament began, and he hadn't lost a single match. He seemed to have an intense hatred for Śakra, and he was competing intensely in order to take down all of the teams that stood before him one after the other. …The battles he was involved in even caused damage to the barrier of the game, and this had given me glimpse into the horror of fighting against the god-class beings. After seeing the kind of fierce battle that Mahabali-san engaged in, there were many teams that abstained from the tournament out of

fear. Of course, this kind of shocking effect wasn't just from Mahabali-san's team alone, this was also the case for the other god-class beings. It was no surprise that people felt afraid after being able to witness the attacks of the legendary gods in front of their own eyes. Even I felt that it was growing more and more difficult to obtain victories in the Tournament…the fortunate thing was that we had already fought against opponents of that level before, so we could continue to participate despite our fears. Ravel then said

"Mahabali-sama's team is also one of the top candidates. It is impossible to defeat him without the determination to win the entire Tournament. I'm sure that our upcoming game against the [Leisure of the Kings] team will be equally difficult. As the [Oppai Dragon] team, we have to muster the utmost of our full strength."

Indeed, we would soon have a game against Vidar-san's team. Nonetheless, there was still Rias and Vali's game prior to that…. For us, it would be the first time that we had encountered a god-class being in the tournament, so there were many things for us to worry about. In terms of combat strength, our opponent has an absolute advantage, so how do we turn that around…no, how we counteract that is a major issue. The victory of the [Leisure of the Kings] team is almost set in stone — that's what everyone is probably thinking. I say 'almost' because I have used the power of oppai to invoke a countless number of possibilities, so what might truly happen is still uncertain. A miracle caused by oppai—. If I can really make it happen, then I want to do it! It would really help to have the power of the Chichigami right now…I became immersed in the qualms of whether something like that would actually happen! W-Well, it was only a 'miracle' at that time because it happened by chance. Instead of concerning myself with such an uncertain and indecipherable miracle, it would be most realistic to focus on my own strengthening

and pre-battle preparations…. Coupled with the request that was made by Roygun Belphegor-san, it would be best to concentrate on making in-depth preparations for our strategy. …Whilst burdened with all sorts of unease, I also had another concern. My gaze fell onto Ravel who was walking beside me. Yesterday, a while after the wedding talks ended, Ravel's mother spoke to me in private.

[I watched the last game. …Hyoudou Issei-san. I did tell you in the past. Ravel's true nature is the path of supremacy, and if you use it wrongly, you will immediately face such problems.]

The game that Ravel's mother was talking about — was the game against the Sitri peerage. In facing off against Sona-senpai who was good at formulating various tactics, Ravel didn't make any plans to deal with them and instead adopted bold, large-scale manoeuvres to beautifully break through Sona-senpai's tactics. By the end, we had obtained a major victory. The other teams and various media groups who watched the game were all completely shocked. The chilling and bold approach enthralled the audience…but on the other hand, the fighting style which didn't show a single shred of mercy had received criticisms such as 'It lacked the style of the Oppai Dragon team' and 'The Phoenix family's eldest daughter is a cold and ruthless tactician'. Ravel didn't seem to care too much about how she was judged, but she was extremely concerned about the criticism which said 'It lacked the style of the Oppai Dragon team'. Ravel's mother continued

[Supremacy is a path of reason, and it also makes it easy to obtain a definite victory. —But its other side will cause resentment in people. It is a forceful and indifferent justice…. Watching the game that she commanded, I'm sure there are people who think that.]

Ravel's mother asserted

[—By relying only on reason, it is impossible to understand each other's true feelings.]

…Was she saying that Ravel had never understood a person's true feelings? I am the 'Oppai Dragon'…a dream that cannot betray the children of the world. If I continue to fight in this manner, the criticism will only continue to intensify, and things will truly turn out just as Ravel's mother had said. But even so! Ravel has done extremely well! If we didn't have the strategies that were formulated by Ravel, we might not have been able to win the game! I…know that Ravel works around the clock to make these plans as well as manage and adjust my schedule at the same time. Despite doing so many things at the same time, we still triumphed over Sona-senpai, and I feel proud of Ravel! —My manager is the best manager in the Underworld! That's what I believe! But Ravel's mother also added

[Moreover, that girl can probably only command the strategy up until the end of the Tournament's preliminaries. Once things get serious, all that'll be left are the mythological figures of Maou-class or god-class level. Will all of the tactics and strategies that have been used so far still work then…?]

To god-class beings, our…Ravel's tactics might be ineffective. After all, these are the mighty gods who appear in their respective mythologies. How much of an impact will the tactics devised by a Devil be able to have? After all, the opponents are gods who can cause all manner of miracles—. How exactly does one go about formulating a battle plan against opponents who can make miracles happen? With so many problems to be resolved, we should first discuss our path from here on, and based on that, we should once again consider our battle plan for the [Leisure of the Kings] team. Since our goal is to be the victors of the Tournament, this is a

necessary hurdle for us to overcome. There was no option to give up from the beginning. Really, it hasn't been easy to be the [Oppai Dragon] up until now. So Azazel-sensei's words 'You'll have things tough from now on' had this kind of meaning as well. There are so many people, like my comrades and my peerage who are supporting me from behind. But the final decision is my own. It is me who moves forward. I can't always let others deal with the situation. — I've already become a [King]. I have to become even stronger. Alright, after we return, we'll start our club activities first, and then I'll have another chat with Ravel or my team members afterwards. With Kuoh Academy now in sight, I saw Nakiri — and Bennia run past in front of us.

"Those guys! Their aim was actually that side!"

Seeing Nakiri as he shouted out, Ravel and I immediately understood that something had happened. I shouted out to the two of them

"Hey! Bennia! Nakiri!"

After the two of them noticed, they turned to look at us. Nakiri yelled

"Hyoudou-senpai! Phoenix too!"

<<Boss Oppai Dragon!>>

The two of them quickly ran towards us.

"What's wrong? Has something happened…"

Before I could finish, Nakiri grabbed my hand!

"You should hurry as well, senpai!"

It was rare for Bennia's expression to look so serious.

<<Nekomata-senpai and the others are being targeted by Grim Reapers.>>

—What!? It sounds like there's trouble!

Nakiri explained the situation to us as we ran. One of the Student Council's miscellaneous tasks was to clean the rubbish around the perimeter of the school, and this week, it just happened to be Nakiri and Millarca-san who were on duty. The clubs weren't particularly busy, so Koneko-chan, Gasper (as a classmate) and Bennia (as a member of the Sitri peerage and Student Council) volunteered to help clean up. —Just then, they were attacked by a group of Grim Reapers! Why would Grim Reapers show up here!? While I was shocked, I also worried about whether the barrier that covered this area was working…. Nakiri had originally split everyone up to clean on two separate sides, but the majority of the Grim Reapers homed in on Koneko-chan, Gasper and Millarca-san's group, and so Nakiri hurried over to the direction that they were in. On the way, they bumped into us.

<<I originally thought that I was their target.>>

Bennia said. She was originally a Grim Reaper executive — the daughter of Orcus who was one of the ultimate-class Grim Reapers. Just that was a reason for her to be targeted. However, for some reason, the Grim Reapers only repulsed Nakiri and the others back slightly before immediately regrouping and rushing towards the location of Koneko-chan and the others. In other words, their aim — was someone among Koneko-chan, Gasper and Millarca-san…. After stepping into a small grove near Kuoh Academy, I could feel the air of battle. It seemed that the fight had already begun a while ago. As we

ran to catch up by following the trail of the battle — we noticed that Koneko-chan, Gasper, and Millarca-san had been completely surrounded by a group of Grim Reapers cloaked in black at a small, wide, open space. Just as they were in the past, they were draped in cloaks and their eyes emitted an eerie glow. Holding large and detestable scythes in their hands, their clear hostility was directed at Koneko-chan and the others. But, those who had been surrounded—
.

"Ha! Tou!"

Koneko-chan cleverly dodged the scythe blade that the Grim Reapers swung at her, and her retaliatory punches and kicks all struck the centre of her opponents.

"—Please don't underestimate me."

Gasper's eyes flashed with a dangerous crimson glow; even without turning into a dark beast, he could extend his shadow and freely control it. The shadow had tentacles that almost seemed alive as they reached out towards the Grim Reapers and firmly bound them. Gasper turned towards the constricted Grim Reapers, transformed his right hand into Balor, and then sent the Grim Reapers flying with his study arm. Gasper's partial Balor transformation must also be one of the fruits of his training. That guy is really getting used to a close-quarters fighting style.

"Torya! I'm tired! Really tired!"

While Millarca-san was dressed in her thickly-layered uniform, she mouthed out various complaints as she fought with her bare hands to easily knock down the Grim Reapers. As soon as there was an opening, she used her fists to defeat them. It seemed as though she

had significant physical strength as a Vampire…. Nakiri watched Millarca-san as she fought and shouted out

“Millarca! Don’t overdo it!”

“Ah, Ouryuu. Don’t worry, something like this is nothing.”

“I’m not talking about that! Millarca, if you use your power, then this whole area will become like hell!”

“It’s daytime right now so it’s fine. There’s only a problem if it’s night time.”

Grim Reapers were said to be stronger than low-class Devils, but Millarca-san was able to defeat them with just her bare hands. It seemed as though she was not an ordinary Vampire, so just how much stronger would she become at night…? After hearing Nakiri’s voice, the Grim Reapers became aware of our arrival. Their eyes all homed in on me. Their air of vigilance grew stronger and stronger.

<<Sekiryuutei!>>

<<It’s the current [Red Dragon].>>

I instantly equipped my armour and prepared to charge forth at any moment. And then, the leader of that group of Grim Reapers who appeared to have distinctive decorations on his cloak said

<<…The Sekiryuutei huh. He’s a bad opponent.>>

With a wave of his hand, all of the Grim Reapers dispersed, and all they left behind was a black afterimage as they disappeared from the open space in the blink of an eye.

“H-Hey! Wait!”

I said, but they had already fled. …T-The Grim Reapers are that wary of me? W-Well, compared to when I had been attacked in the Underworld during the [Demonic Beast Riot], I was now much stronger. Bennia put her scythe away as she said

<<…Judging by their aura just now, they should be servants of Thanatos-sama. He's one of the ultimate-class Grim Reapers, and also one of the executives of the Netherworld. He belongs to a dark faction of the Netherworld.>>

—They're from the faction of an ultimate-class Grim Reaper!? What was the meaning of the executive's servants coming here…? We were simply left there in our confusion. Gasper said

"…Ise-senpai, they were aiming for Koneko-chan."

—What! I looked at Koneko-chan.

"What?"

Koneko-chan herself also revealed a surprised expression and asked herself

"……Why me…?"

…In any case, it seems like another suspicious incident is veering towards us.

[1] Oba-san: Literally means aunt/auntie. In Japanese culture though, the term can be used to refer to almost any older woman.
[2] Shiromuku: A traditional Japanese wedding gown for brides. As the name suggests, it is a completely white kimono, and often has an elaborate headpiece as well.

LIFE.2 THE GOD OF DEATH AND THE DOG OF THE BLADE

Part 1

The evening of the day that we had been attacked by the Grim Reapers—.

In the VIP room that was situated on the top floor of the Hyoudou residence, all of the members who could make it here had gathered. This was mainly centred on the Gremory peerage, and those who lived at the Hyoudou residence. However, Kuroka wasn't here because she had gone off to join Vali and the others, and it was also difficult to get in touch with them. We had told Rias that Koneko-chan was targeted by the Grim Reapers, and everyone was quite surprised. It was also a serious matter since they had invaded despite the presence of a barrier, and in response to this attack, Rias said

"…The sudden attack of the Grim Reapers may be related to the case that Sairaorg and the others are dealing with right now."

The case that Sairaorg-san is dealing with…? It was the first time that I had heard of this. Ravel asked Rias

"Is that story true?"

Rias nodded.

"Yes, Sairaorg also contacted me to tell me to be careful."

"What happened?"

I asked again, and this time, Ravel answered my question

"—It is said that there are some unidentified Devils who are rioting in various territories."

…A group of unidentified Devils are going on a rampage!? W-What's going on!? Could it be possible that remnants of the Old Maou Faction are rebelling again? No, there were rumours that [Khaos Brigade] and the Old Maou Faction had already ceased their activities due to the dissolution of Qlippoth….

"In some territories…and Devils with unknown identities. But, are they really Devils?"

Rias made a difficult expression upon hearing my words.

"Their origin seems to be completely unknown. In the Underworld, unlike long ago, even ordinary members of the public will have ID cards issued to them. But these completely unknown Devils have appeared in various territories such as the Bael territory."

Devils with unknown identities huh. No matter how deep the foundations of a class society are, it's still possible for Devils of unknown origin to appear out of nowhere…. After all, the Devils' society is still a bit undeveloped in some aspects, and there are still many ancient Devils hiding around in the far corners of the Underworld.

"Could it be possible that…there are descendants of some clans who have refused to register their identity, and now they're unleashing their dissatisfaction at the current government?"

Rias' expression turned complicated upon hearing my words.

"…If that really is the case, then things would be easier to resolve…"

If they really were descendants of older Devils who had refused to register their identities, then that would actually be easy to deal with huh…. Irina said with a puzzled look

“Reincarnated Angels have also received orders to crack down on suspicious individuals. Could it be related to this incident as well?”

“Have there been any movements in Heaven?”

Irina nodded in response to Xenovia’s question.

“Within our religious jurisdiction, there have been several incidents caused by suspicious people. All of the reincarnated Angels led by Joker have gone to deal with it. Though they said it was fine even if I didn’t go out…”

So there were also various incidents in the areas governed by Heaven and the Church! Everything seemed to be getting more and more suspicious. Combined with the fact that the attack of the Grim Reapers could be related, it was possible that this was exactly as Rias had suspected.

“……”

Koneko-chan’s face was filled with unease. After all, she had been targeted all of a sudden and she didn’t even understand the reason why she was being targeted either. Anyone would definitely feel uneasy if they were targeted without knowing the reason for it. — Just as a wave of anxiousness began to surface upon all of our faces, Akeno-san received a message via a magic circle. Akeno-san sighed after comprehending the information.

“There’s news that has arrived that may be relevant to the topic that we’re discussing.”

After saying that, she picked up a pen and began to scribble it down on a piece of paper before passing it along to Rias. Akeno-san said

"—[Slash Dog], Tobio-niisa…Ikuse-san has sent through a message. He says that he'll tell us about it at the designated place. …Does anyone know that address?"

A report from Ikuse-san? By the way, Akeno-san is Ikuse-san's relative, so that's why she calls him 'Tobio-niisama'. The [Slash Dog] team was the Grigori's special forces squad, and they also acted as logistical support within [DxD]. They lurked around in various places and shared various intelligence reports with us. …So they've already obtained information on the situation that we're concerned about huh. Rias stared at the address of 'the designated place' and said

"I don't really know."

I also looked at it…although it wasn't very far from Kuoh Town, I'd never been there before either. Where exactly is it? After Rossweisse-san saw it, she exclaimed 'Ah' as she raised her hand

"…This bar, I seem to recall that I've been there whilst accompanying Odin-sama before. Azazel-sensei has also taken me there…so I think I know how to get there."

Surprisingly, it looks like there is someone among us who knows the location.

The evening of the next day—.
Our party of four which included me, Rias, my manager Ravel, and our guide Rossweisse-san made our way towards the place that had been specified by Ikuse-san. Rias had delegated the task of ascertaining the reason why Koneko-chan was being targeted to

Akeno-san and the others. Rossweisse-san drove us to the designated place in her car. The bar was situated along a bustling downtown street which was two stops away from Kuoh Town by train. Because we had come to visit a place like this at night, we didn't wear our school uniforms. We came here in our personal clothes instead. After all, there were still a few problems in us coming here since we were still minors. It would be quite troublesome if we got caught by the police. The signboard on the outside had the two words 'Black Dog'. Rossweisse-san spoke as if she had fully remembered

"That's right, it's on the second floor here."

At the shop where the signboard was displayed, we went up the stairs to the second floor. The first floor appeared to be an ordinary restaurant. After opening the rather stylish and modern door—.

"—— ♪"

We were instantly captivated by the wonderful and magnificent singing voice that filled the shop. Looking closely, there was a small stage in the depths of the shop, and a blonde beauty in a white dress was singing with her splendid voice upon the stage. All of the guests also paused their conversations to listen to the song. …Judging by the lyrics, it sounded like a foreign ballad that I had never heard of before. But, I was very familiar with the beautiful woman who was on the stage! During the Evil Dragon War, I had seen her once before going off the stop Trihexa! She was the only woman whom Vali couldn't oppose, Lavinia Reni! No, but…. Before I even became aware of it, I had become fascinated by her, and I thought that she was truly such a beautiful woman. Beside me, Rias cleared her throat lightly and then pulled on my ear.

“Over here.”

Owowow! Rias, are you angry? I saw Lavinia-san and felt fascinated by her and made you angry! I’m really sorry! I still don’t have much of a resistance to beautiful women! Rias sent her gaze towards the bar. A young bartender stood there. —It was Ikuse-san! After we saw him, the four of us sat down side-by-side at the bar counter. Ikuse-san poured glasses of water for us while he asked

“She has a nice voice, doesn’t she? She’s our poster girl.”

Poster girl Lavinia-san! Ah, this place is truly an exquisite bar, so please allow me to keep coming here! I couldn’t help but ask Ikuse-san a few of my questions.

“—Ikuse-san, your outfit…”

“Yeah, I’m a bartender here. And she — Lavinia is the exclusive singer here.”

So Ikuse-san is a bartender! I had heard that this was one of the Grigori’s establishments, and since Ikuse-san was already an adult, that was why he worked here. Speaking of which, he’s a pretty cool bartender! This handsome dude looks pretty cool when he’s making cocktails behind the bar counter.

“Welcome, all members of the Hyoudou family. — This is the [Black Dog] Bar. I can’t serve you alcohol, though I can give you some juice. Do you have any requests?”

After he asked us, I replied with

“Mango juice.”

Rias and the others then followed on with

“I’ll have some apple juice please.”

“The same.”

“Well, okay.”

It seemed as though all of the girls had chosen apple juice. Ikuse-san quickly prepared the juice and then placed it on top of the bar counter.

“Thank you.”

After we received it, Ikuse-san said

“Rossweisse-san, I hear that you’ve been here before.”

“Yes, I was with Odin-sama at the time. But you and Lavinia Reni didn’t seem to be here at that time.”

“That would be because I had something else to take care of back then.”

It didn’t seem like he worked here every day. I guess that was only natural.

“Do you work here?”

After listening to my question, Ikuse-san raised the glass of vegetable juice that he had prepared for himself as he replied

“Only in the evening. I’m a university student during the day. I may look like this, but I’m still only twenty two years old.”

He's still a student! B-But, it would be correct for him to be a university student if he's twenty two. Well, I guess working here is his part-time job. It seems pretty nice to work as a bartender.

"Are you also responsible for management?"

Rias asked. Ikuse-san took a sip of the vegetable juice and then answered

"No, the manager is Azazel-san. He isn't here now, so he's represented by the cadres of the organisation instead."

So this shop belongs to Azazel-sensei huh. That person, or the Grigori to be more precise, has given us that school and so many other things…. The supernatural races may actually possess a lot of establishments in places that we don't even know about. We then heard a round of applause echo about, and as we turned back around, we noticed that Lavinia-san's song had ended. Ikuse-san said

"Vali has also been here only once before, though he obviously made sure to come at a time when Lavinia wasn't here."

Heh, so that guy's also been here. He also chose to come at a time when Lavinia-san wasn't here, so I guess that guy isn't very good at dealing with women…. Because he kept on ignoring Kuroka's advances, she eventually turned her eyes towards me. B-But, I have benefited a lot in terms of erotic occasions, so I should thank him for that. But if he's always refusing such a beauty like that as well, then he'll—. Just as I was thinking that, a voice suddenly came from behind us.

"Exactly. Va-kun is so cold [1]."

"Wah! When did she…"

As I turned to look back — Lavinia-san was right behind me. Lavinia-san gave a curtsy and then greeted us.

“Please allow me to introduce myself again. I’m Lavinia Reni, a witch belonging to [Grau Zauberer].”

She was a powerful witch who was also the wielder of the Longinus [Absolute Demise]. In a slightly shy manner, I returned my greeting.

“Likewise, it’s nice to meet you. Speaking of which, we did meet each other once during the Evil Dragon War, before the battle with Trihexa.”

Lavinia-san smiled lightly as she said

“That’s true.”

The atmosphere of this warm and sweet onee-san made me feel completely relaxed! Moreover, the cleavage revealed by her dress really emphasised her magnificent peaks! Vaaaliiii! Are you really a member of the butt faction!? Even if that’s true, did you still decide to choose that after seeing Lavinia-san’s chest!? I-I should go and ask him if he’s really a member of the butt faction….

“““……”””

The way that I was dreamily staring at Lavinia-san caused all of the girls — Rias, Rossweisse-san and Ravel to look at me with particularly frightening glares! Lavinia-san sat down beside me and created a small magic circle upon the bar counter from which she took something out.

“—I want you to see this.”

The object that Lavinia-san had taken out — was a small notebook. Lavinia-san spread the pages of the notebook open and urged me to read it. …Is this what Ikuse-san wanted to tell us about?

“This is…?”

I picked the notebook up and looked at the cover. The words [Vali Lucifer] were written there in English. The name of the owner of this notebook…in other words, this is Vali’s!? What’s Vali’s notebook doing here!? I looked up at Lavinia-san’s face, but she simply returned a sweet smile at me. It seemed as though I had no choice but to read it, so I flipped through and then I came across this passage.

- [I feel regret that I was born into this era. A world without God. I would have wanted to defeat God.]
- [I would rather die than to live in a world without any strong opponents. I have no interest in a boring world like this.]
- [I am the one who has inherited the blood of the first-generation Maou Lucifer. But, I am a child of mixed-blood born from a father who was the grandchild of the old Maou and a human mother. —I obtained the [White Dragon] Sacred Gear because of my half-human blood. I have been born as a true kin of Lucifer, and also as the [White Dragon].]
- [If one had to describe fate or a miracle, perhaps that would be me.]

…There were some lines within that sounded familiar. Say, aren't these the same words that he said to me the very first time that we fought against each other…?

"…W-What exactly is this?"

I asked Lavinia-san, and Lavinia-san then proudly said

"—This is the profile material collection that Va-kun wrote four years ago. It's so well written that I just thought that I had to show it to the lifelong rival who would one day appear before Va-kun. After he wrote such cool lines four years ago, Va-kun's been constantly training through night and day."

—Vali's profile material collection. ……All of these are entries that that guy wrote four years ago!? He had so many chuunibyou [2] outbursts one after the other!? Moreover, he still seems to be using them!? I seemed to recall having heard most of the phrases! In front of us, Ikuse-san covered his face with his hands as he tried to hold himself back from laughing out loud.

"…The notebook that Vali's been looking for all this time…Lavinia, so it's been in your hands. And you decided to take it out at a time like this…"

"It can only be at a time like this."

So Vali's been looking for this notebook. After all, with so many embarrassing notes, this whole thing is like dark history! But it is pretty ironic that the woman he never wants to meet has been holding onto it the whole time. It truly is quite a dilemma. I really wanted to find out what kind of expression Vali would have if he found out about this.

“…Somehow, I just feel as though all of the lines written in here sound familiar.”

I managed to squeeze out a smile, and Lavinia-san exposed a gratifying smile that seemed to indicate that she felt satisfied by the fact that her little brother had been praised.

“That’s good to hear. Va-kun said that he definitely had to say those words coolly in front of his rival, and that’s why he prepared these. He must be rather satisfied now.”

Lavinia-san gleefully jumped up, and the two peaks of her chest also bounced as well! Kuh! Her oppai are massive! Please allow me to have a good look…! Just as my eyes became fixated on the marvellous sight, a voice suddenly reverberated across from the entrance.

“The Ice Princess is Ikuse Tobio and Vali’s princess-sama. So don’t get too carried away, Sekiryuutei.”

As I turned to look — it was actually Cao Cao!

“Cao Cao!? Why are you here?”

I couldn’t help but stand up after seeing his unexpected appearance here! Cao Cao casually sat down at an empty seat at the counter. Ikuse-san didn’t seem too surprised by the fact that Cao Cao was here. Ikuse-san prepared a glass for him as he said

“He comes here occasionally to exchange some information with me. Both of us are agents of the organisation.”

“That’s right. —Hot milk.”

Cao Cao gave his order rather naturally. …Hot milk huh. Surprisingly, he ordered a rather cute drink. I said to Cao Cao

“I saw that match of yours earlier. It was a good game.”

“I’m honoured. I’d really like to fight against both you and Ikuse-san next time.”

Just as Cao Cao said, Ikuse-san had also decided to participate in the Tournament as part of the [Slash Dog] team. Lavinia-san was also a member of that team. Of course, they had also been winning all of their matches quite smoothly. Just like us, they had yet to encounter a team of god-class beings, and even though they had encountered teams consisting of ultimate-class Devils, they had easily come out on top. Their most outstanding aspect was that their team’s overall coordination was very well rehearsed, so both Ravel and Sona-senpai praised their teamwork. Perhaps it was because they were often called into combat where they dived into the dark side of various factions, so their precision was very high. After Ikuse-san gave Cao Cao a glass of hot milk, we finally began to discuss the real topic at hand.

“To be honest, Hyoudou Issei-kun, there is actually a faction acting behind the scenes of this Tournament. —The Grim Reapers of the Netherworld.”

—What! Grim Reapers! After hearing about this information, we all looked at each other. This was exactly what we were after. Ikuse-san continued

“You guys might already know this, but there have been frequent riots in the territories of various factions. They have all occurred at a

similar time across the Underworld, areas under Heaven's jurisdiction, Asgard, Olympus and elsewhere as well."

Rias and Irina had also mentioned this yesterday. And then Cao Cao continued further

"After capturing the perpetrators, we found that all of them were Devils. However, their affiliations and identity were unclear. After comparing them to all of the Devils registered in the Underworld, we couldn't find any clues at all. It might even have been better if they were just concealed by the higher-ups of the Underworld, but these Devils are pure-blooded Devils without any trace of mixed blood, they're just pure and genuine Devils."

…Pure-blooded Devils whose affiliations and identity are unknown? The entire incident seemed like it was growing more suspicious by the second. Ikuse-san said to us

"The Devils' side has also come up emptyhanded, so the Grigori is currently performing investigations, and according to those investigations, we now know just two things about these mysterious Devils. Firstly, the report on the composition of their bodies and demonic energy indicates that they resemble certain Devils — ancient Devils, the Devils that other high-class Devils refer to as being the 'first-generation'. Simply put, they have been able to detect from their bodies and demonic energy that they bear similarities to those such as the first-generation Gremory and first-generation Bael. Secondly, they've been able to detect traces of Grim Reapers in the vicinity of where these Devils have caused incidents."

……T-This is way too shocking. These mysterious Devils who have caused riots everywhere are actually Devils who have bodies similar to that of the first-generation Bael…. And Grim Reapers have also

appeared close to where these incidents occurred…? If all of these first-generation Devils have been hiding themselves the entire time, and they've only decided to come out to cause riots now…it would be nice if it was as simple as that. Rias and the others as were also confused. Rias placed her hand underneath her chin as she said

"…Grim Reapers have appeared close to where the incidents have occurred, so one could say that these Devils are somehow related to Hades. Is that a reasonable assumption?"

Ikuse-san nodded in agreement to Rias' theory.

"Yeah, I think most Grim Reapers act in accordance to Hades' will. However, there are still some parts that cannot be explained. Yesterday, Grim Reapers showed up to attack you guys, and they also boldly left behind traces of their attack."

The majority of Grim Reapers follow Hades' instructions…and the Grim Reapers don't seem to care that they've left behind traces of their attack…? In other words—.

"The Grim Reapers that attacked Koneko-chan yesterday and those that have appeared near the mysterious Devils so far are not the same?"

Ikuse-san nodded in agreement to my query.

"Aside from the Devils, it's the first time that the Grim Reapers have acted on their own. And no matter how much we thought about it, we couldn't come up with a reason as to why Toujou Koneko-san was targeted. But either way, both the Devils who have caused these incidents and the Grim Reapers that attacked you are connected to the Netherworld in some way. There have been at least

two attempts from the Netherworld, and they've impacted various factions."

…Hades, that skeletal god, so he's finally making his move huh. After Rizevim's death, Hades had become the number one threat. Because the Tournament was being held, the eyes of both Shiva and Śakra were focused there, and so we had to constantly stay vigilant of any movements from the Netherworld. Cao Cao shrugged

"Mount Meru, or perhaps Śakra has only one thing on his mind, and that is Shiva. At least until the end of the Tournament, there won't be any movements from him."

Cao Cao blew off the steam from the glass of hot milk as he spoke.

"I don't know how frequently the games will be carried out from now on, but trying to maintain the status quo on the surface whilst planning a war at the same time would be a plain waste of time to Śakra. On the contrary, he'll actually be able to achieve his goal of a duel with Shiva earlier by participating in the games, so Śakra shouldn't be behind anything sinister because of this. Moreover, being able to fight against gods other than Shiva in an environment where their battles will be officially recognised is something that Śakra enjoys from the bottom of his heart."

"In fact, perhaps it would be better to say that you've received orders to eliminate anyone who plans to hinder the Tournament."

Cao Cao directed a smile towards Ikuse-san.

"Yeah, we have received such instructions. So I'll be investigating those dangerous folks. And the target would be those Grim Reapers."

After Cao Cao gulped the glass of hot milk down in one go, he placed his money down on the bar counter and then stood up to leave.

“My side will also investigate the connection between the mysterious Devils and the Grim Reapers, and I’ll let you guys know if we find anything.”

After Cao Cao said that, he walked towards the door, but he suddenly paused and asked me

“By the way, I have something to ask you. Hyoudou Issei, which side do you think will win between Rias Gremory and Vali?”

—Hmm! …This guy actually asked me right in front of Rias about my opinion on the game that was just about to happen. But, my view was already decided upon long ago, and so I answered without any hesitation.

“I don’t know who will win or who will lose, but I’ll definitely be cheering for Rias. But, it is also true that I can’t imagine how Vali will lose either.”

These were my honest feelings. It was needless to say that I would be cheering for Rias. But it was also a fact that Vali and the others were strong. I couldn’t imagine the sight of Vali losing because I felt such a strong sense of competition with that fateful rival of mine. In response to my answer, Cao Cao nodded as he said

“I see.”

Beside me, Lavinia-san quietly said

“I’m…only cheering for Va-kun just this once. I’m sorry.”

Lavinia-san seemed to act rather stiff, but both Rias and I said 'it's okay, it's okay' to stop her from feeling too guilty about it. Vali, that guy, he clearly has such a considerate onee-san, so why doesn't he want to see her? …Could it be that that guy's actually quite shy? After seeing Cao Cao off, we continued to exchange the information that we had before disbanding. Ah, I originally wanted to find out about why Koneko-chan had been targeted, but I didn't expect yet another layer to be added to the complexity of the incident…. Well, we originally belonged to an anti-terrorist team, but there had been nothing to worry about until now. We had been so immersed in the Tournament thus far, but I began to feel nervous about my role in [DxD] after such a long absence from it.

Part 2

Although the day of the match between Rias and Vali continued to get closer, Rias, Akeno-san, Ravel, Sona-senpai, Shinra-senpai and I gathered in the VIP room of the Hyoudou residence so that we could share our information on why the Grim Reapers were targeting Koneko-chan. After we told Sona-senpai and the others about the information that we had acquired from Ikuse-san and Cao Cao, Sona-senpai began to speak about Koneko-chan's situation.

"A shortcut through all of this may be to explore Koneko-san's past."

"It may be clearer than asking Kuroka-san — what does everyone think?"

Sona-senpai agreed with Ravel's proposal. Although we had heard about Koneko-chan's past from Kuroka before, Sona-senpai's intention was to investigate it in more detail.

“Do you have a way to explore the past?”

Rias asked Sona-senpai, who seemed to have an idea about it.

“Directly…though I can’t say for certain, there is a type of Youkai that can show the past of someone via someone else who is related to them.”

Sona-senpai replied. So there exists a Youkai that can see the past! It was the first time that I had heard of this. However, Rias also seemed to know about it, and she mentioned the name of that Youkai.

“—Could it be the Magic Mirror? The mirror Youkai.”

Shinra-senpai answered Rias’ question.

“Yes, there is a clan of Magic Mirror Youkai who are able to show the past of someone via someone related to them. They’re also known as Ungaikyo [3]. Although there are supposedly many restrictive conditions, as long as they’re satisfied, one should be able to see both the living and the dead, and you can also speak to that person as well. If we use this ability, Kuroka-san and even Koneko-san’s past…the close relatives of the past who knew the Nekomata sisters can be called out.”

S-So there’s actually a type of mirror Youkai with this kind of ability huh. It’s quite amazing to be able to speak with the dead. Well, given how vast the supernatural world is, it shouldn’t be surprising that there are Youkai with all sorts of abilities, and the Sitri peerage seem to have some understanding of these Youkai. A member of one of the families that are in charge of Japan’s supernatural is a member of the Sitri peerage, and so that’s why they excel when it comes to Youkai. Sona-senpai then explained to us

“However, the current one was killed due to attack of [Khaos Brigade], so it will still take some time for the successor to inherit that role.”

No way! The attack of [Khaos Brigade] also spread to that place…. Those bastards, they’ve really caused all sorts of damage to the various factions. Shinra-senpai said

“The Sitri peerage was previously able to establish a unique connection and relationship with the possessor…but due to their death, things have been affected. Because it is a unique ability, it has rather strict constraints. Especially after the current Magic Mirror passed away, all of the people who had sought help from them have lost their memories of that time. Even third parties who were informed of those things have had their memories disappear.”

What is this? All of the people who have sought its help in the past have had their memories of it disappear. In other words, all of the people who have spoken to the mirror or those related to the mirror in any way have had all of their memories from that time disappear because of the mirror Youkai’s death. Even the people who heard about it from someone else have had their memories of it disappear. Anyway, since the Ungaikyo has passed away, why don’t we just resort to exploring Koneko-chan’s past in the traditional way? Sona-senpai then continued

“But, as long as we can find the next Ungaikyo and allow it to formally inherit the position, the memories of everyone who saw it before will return.”

Oh, so that’s possible! There is still a solution then! Well, it’s best if we act sooner. But in regards to that, there isn’t much information on the Ungaikyo, and our own game is also coming up…. But just as

such thoughts streamed through my mind, Ravel nodded and enthusiastically said

“The first step is to find that Ungaikyo then. I will also use the Phoenix House’s information network!”

Everyone directed their eyes towards Ravel, who seemed rather enthusiastic. Ravel suddenly became shy.

“…I want to help Koneko-san. And we’re also friends…”

The Ravel before my eyes was no longer the same brave Ravel as of late, she was simply a girl of a suitable age who got fired up for the sake of her friendship. Ravel’s proposal was correct though, and we all agreed.

“I will also ask the head of the Himejima clan.”

Akeno-san said. The information network of the Five Principal Clans who were most knowledgeable on Japan’s abilities and supernatural beings would probably be a powerful resource. We planned to use our own intelligence network to collect relevant information, and at the same time, ask Ikuse-san and the Grigori to help us.

“Bennia, are you here?”

After Sona-senpai said that, a magic circle appeared beside her. Bennia then hopped out from the magic circle, and it made me think that the way she appeared was still so unique.

<<I am here, Master Sona.>>

“Please stay here to help Rias and Ise-kun, Bennia. You understand the Grim Reapers, and you can also sense their wavelength, so your abilities will be vital to them.”

<<Understood.>>

“Let us know if anything happens.”

After Sona-senpai and Shinra-senpai reached an agreement with us, they left Bennia with us and then left. I…fell into deep thought. At present, neither Koneko-chan nor Kuroka were present, so Rias and I both decided that we shouldn’t make Koneko-chan feel even more burdened than she already was. Koneko-chan…she had a very difficult time in the past. Although she had already worked hard to overcome it, if she had to recall the memories of that time, it was possible that it could affect her mental state again. She wanted to gain valuable experience through the World Tournament, and she would also be fighting against her own sister in the next game. If we worried her too much, it was possible that she would overstrain herself again. Rias said

“Koneko has certainly become stronger, but she still has a weak side. She is determined to overcome her difficult past, but if she recalls the memories of those days, it’s possible that her mind may actually collapse.”

Rias was also quite worried for Koneko-chan. She was carefully considering how to deal with the situation. Rias had taken Koneko-chan in, and helped her overcome her psychological trauma, and that was why she was so worried about this incident. It was also precisely because of this that she didn’t intend to allow Koneko-chan to come in here. I had a conversation with Rias about Koneko-chan’s past before.

[Ise, did I ever tell you that Kuroka’s former master was a high-class Devil?]

[If I recall correctly, it was Naberius of the Seventy Two Pillars, right? A Devil of a branch family took Kuroka and Koneko-chan in.]

I had more or less heard about Kuroka and Koneko-chan's past from Rias. It was mainly the story of when Kuroka was a servant Devil. Kuroka's original master was a Devil who possessed the ability to forcibly strengthen the power of their servants, and they would also use this on their own family and relatives as well. It was scary how they didn't hold back even against their own relatives. And then, their master's interest was directed to Kuroka's little sister who was also a Nekomata — Koneko-chan. And that was why Kuroka killed her master. Rias continued

[Yes, that's right. It seems they were an aristocrat obsessed with research. Albeit in a bad direction. They ignored the main family's wishes and continued to carry out dubious experiments. But there was also another problem. The thing is, when Kuroka started living here, this is something that onii-sama told me through Grayfia—]

What Rias said was that the research that their former master conducted was carried on and taken over by someone else, but when the Maou's soldiers arrived at the house, they found that almost all traces of the research had disappeared. They heard that there had been a suspicious explosion. The research conducted by Kuroka's original master had also attracted much suspicion from the upper echelons of the Underworld, and both Kuroka and Koneko-chan were identified as dangerous and unstable factors as well. Rias continued

[Kuroka was interrogated several times, but she had no clue about the true intention of the research. The only thing that was certain was that the research was extremely dangerous.]

[In other words…before she even knew about the purpose of the research, Kuroka killed her master in order to protect Koneko-chan huh…]

Rias sighed as she nodded.

[Knowing that her little sister would fall into poisonous hands, Kuroka definitely wouldn't have allowed that to go on in silence. Of course, she also had a grudge.]

That is to say, because of Kuroka's deep personal feelings — her anger erupted and she completely obliterated her original master and the surroundings. Upon seeing the power of the Nekomata, a deep psychological scar was also inflicted upon Koneko-chan. Koneko-chan and Kuroka's time with the branch family of the Naberius House…seemed to conceal a lot of anxiety.

Part 3

Although I was quite worried about Koneko-chan's situation and the frequent riots caused by the mysterious Devils throughout various factions, time would not wait for anyone. Our [Sekiryuutei of Blazing Truth] team and Rias' team were practising together today. The location was not the training space that was meant to be used by the Sekiryuutei, but the nostalgic space that was used by the Gremory peerage for training. Although I had said that it was 'nostalgic', it had actually been used until just recently. Because Rias would have her match against Vali and the others very soon, she invited us to act as opponents in a mock battle. Not knowing what would happen and also to follow Sona-senpai's orders, Bennia also tagged along. And thus our training session began.

"Alright, let's go, Lint!"

“Awah, Quarta-paisen, you’re a bit extreme.”

What we saw first was the scene of Xenovia and Lint-san training with each other. Xenovia wielded Durandal and Excalibur as Lint-san nimbly evaded her attacks and used her sword forged of purple flames to counterattack. Waves of holy aura and violent purple flames clashed in mid-air, causing explosions to be set off all over the place one after the other. Xenovia’s training was rather intense, but from this we could also see that Lint-san’s strength wasn’t bad either. As evident from the video recordings of Rias’ games, Lint-san’s fighting style was very practical, and she was also an excellent and powerful female warrior who never backed down. On another side, Koneko-chan and Ravel began to train with each other seriously.

“I’m coming, Koneko-san!”

“Mmm, come!”

Ravel spread open her fiery wings and let loose powerful bullets of fire while Koneko-chan entered her Shirone mode and used white flames to make a myriad of Kasha in order to nullify Ravel’s bullets of fire. Koneko-chan also appeared to be rather enthusiastic about the practise match, most likely because she really wanted to win against her sister. In order to respond to Koneko-chan’s feelings, Ravel reacted with sincerity, and they continued to practise until the two of them were completely exhausted. It wasn’t just this once either. So long as Koneko-chan asked Ravel for it, Ravel would respond to her with sincerity each time. Since Ravel was both a friend and classmate of hers, I guess Koneko-chan felt as though Ravel was both easy and reliable to depend upon. Ravel was also quite aware that Koneko-chan could only ask her because they were of the same age, so she continued to respond positively to all of her requests. …Ravel,

when she was being considerate of our team, she always had a train of thought that followed the principles of supremacy, but when she faced her friend Koneko-chan — she did so with feelings of kingship.

"Koneko-san, your tail seems a bit burnt."

"…It's all because of you, Ravel. You're throwing flames at me so mercilessly."

"I'd be scolded by you if I went easy, so I'm working hard as well, okay?"

"Muu…. Both my ears and tail are burnt, and now it's going to be embarrassing when I show up at the game."

"Fufufufu, allow me to help you brush your fur later."

When she laughed together with Koneko-chan, Ravel didn't act strong-willed and determined as she did in front of us, but instead she revealed a cheerful and lively smile that was fitting for a girl of her age. …Ravel desires to stay by my side as my manager, but I want her to grow in the truest sense of the word, like when she's together with her friend Koneko-chan. That's why having more contact like this is good. The next thing I noted was — the battle between the golden humanoid dragon and the large dark beast. The humanoid dragon Nakiri and Gasper in his Balor state; the two boys who were in the same grade began a fierce melee battle. Nakiri's touki-coated fist was thrust at Gasper's body, while Gasper also used his dark fists to retaliate, causing Nakiri to be pushed back. Nakiri shouted

"Damn it! I already knew you were strong, but…you're pretty good, Vladi!"

Nakiri fired off a vast number of spherical bullets that were mixed with his touki and aura. Gasper used his hands to deflect them one after the other as he slowly stretched out their distance.

<<…But you, are you really a human? You're actually able to keep up with the melee techniques that Ise-senpai taught me!>>

Nakiri moved across the ground at high speed and rapidly continued his assault! Gasper summoned a countless number of dark beasts from the shadows. Nakiri kicked them, punched them, and even took out a vast number of spell talismans from his pocket and casted them to return all of the dark beasts back to the nothingness from whence they came.

"I am a human, though I use a few spells as well."

After the two of them used their own techniques to hold each other back for a round, they resumed their melee battle again! The two of them showed fearless smiles to each other.

"…I can't lose to a classmate, and especially not in front of Hyoudou-senpai."

<<That's my line. I can't shamefully lose in front of Ise-senpai and Rias-oneechan.>>

Like this, the mock battle of the two male classmates continued as they fought happily in earnest. I watched all of our team members train together from the sidelines as Rias stood beside me.

"It looks like those two will make good rivals for each other."

She was talking about Gasper and Nakiri.

“Yeah. After all, they’re both boys of the same age who don’t feel like they can lose to each other.”

I said. Indeed, it was natural that they would be concerned about other males of the same age. Just as I thought so — the male who was of the same age as me — Kiba approached me.

“Have you finished with your lunch box? It’s about time that I’d like to have a mock battle with you. It’s been a long time since we last fought, so how about it?”

Just as Kiba said, before our training session began, the girls + Kiba prepared bento boxes for us, and I had already polished mine up. Today’s bento was Akeno-san’s handmade ‘Seaweed Bento’, while Kiba’s was a ‘Character Bento’. Kiba’s bento used ‘my face in my armour’ as the character prototype…it was almost like the real thing, so I had some complicated feelings about it! But regardless of whether it was Akeno-san’s bento or Kiba’s bento, both of them were delicious! I energised myself as I stepped forward and stood upright as I said to Kiba

“You’re right, it has been a long time since—”

Just when I was halfway through my sentence, the training space suddenly began to distort!

[—What!?]

All of us stopped what we were doing as we were astounded by the scene before our eyes. In response to this, Bennia stood up and revealed an alarmed expression.

<<As expected, they’re here.>>

Just after she said that, the distortion enlarged, and cracks eventually appeared. As the cracks splintered and spread, a hole had been dug out in the air! What appeared from there were Grim Reapers who readily held scythes in their hands! The training space that was located in its own special area and was protected by a defensive barrier had been attacked. This unexpected state of affairs caused Rias to cry out

“T-This can’t be! Even this space is under attack!?”

The Grim Reapers charged out one after the other from the hole that they had pierced in space, and they surrounded us! Close to a hundred Grim Reapers encircled us! All of us remained vigilant as we entered stances to prepare for battle! The opposing side had clear hostility and the intent to kill, and the very fact that they were standing here was proof that a battle was inevitable!

“Ise! Since the enemy has decided to attack us, kill them all without any further ado! They deserve that much for invading us here without permission!”

“Of course!”

Rias and I agreed, so I instantly equipped my armour! These Grim Reapers, I don’t know how they had entered Kuoh Town and this training space, but if they stood in front of us with hostile intentions, then we had no choice but to repel them. Moreover, all of them were staring at Koneko-chan! The Grim Reaper with a decorated cloak was likely their captain, and he pointed at Koneko-chan as he said

<<Hand over the cat.>>

“What are you guys going to do with Koneko-chan?”

I immediately asked.

<<It is something that has nothing to do with you. Well, you'll find out about it eventually.>>

Such remarks caused Rias to fly off the handle. Her precious and adorable Koneko-chan had been targeted by the Grim Reapers, and because of that, this group of Grim Reapers 'deserved to die'. Of course, it was also the same for me! Rias made a chilling expression as her body began to ooze with a deep red aura, and she said

"The reason…you won't say it? I'll ask one thing before I destroy all of you. —Are these the orders of Hades?"

Unexpectedly, the captain-level Grim Reaper answered with

<<We were told only to answer this question. —The answer is no. This is an order from the ultimate-class Grim Reaper Thanatos-sama. It is not an order from Hades-sama.>>

—What! All of us were both surprised and puzzled by his response. Wasn't it Hades' idea?

"……? Thanatos? Not Hades…"

Rias also frowned and looked confused. …It could be a mere lie. But Ikuse-san had also told us of such a possibility. There could be more than one person issuing orders in the Netherworld—. In other words, if the situation was truly as he described, then the person targeting Koneko-chan wasn't Hades, but instead the ultimate-class Grim Reaper called Thanatos? Bennia said

<< Thanatos-sama is also the strongest among all of the ultimate-class Grim Reapers. In any case, he is regarded as one of the oldest in the Netherworld.>>

Why would this powerful ultimate-class Grim Reaper act outside of the will of the Netherworld's ruler Hades? We were full of doubts, but our opponents would not wait for us.

<<All we need to capture is the cat! Go!>>

At the captain-level Grim Reaper's command, the army of Grim Reapers swarmed in on us!

"Damn it!"

I yelled out as I sent the Grim Reapers hurtling away! The scythes of the Grim Reapers could directly attack the souls of those who were struck! It was more terrifying than a normal physical attack! While we paid attention to this, we sent the Grim Reapers flying back one after the other.

<<Kuh! Indeed, t-they're strong!>>

The army of Grim Reapers began to hesitate as they witnessed our effortless strength which was more than enough to send them all tumbling back. The captain-level Grim Reaper roared

<<No! It's the cat! Aim for the cat!>>

All of the Grim Reapers directed their eyes at Koneko-chan! That only made things easier for us! We surrounded Koneko-chan to protect her, and then launched our counterattack against the Grim Reapers—. *Zashun!* It was the sound of a swift and powerful slash which was accompanied by an enormous pillar of holy aura that rushed straight up towards the sky. Looking over — the captain-level Grim Reaper had been cut in half by a longsword that was enveloped in a holy aura. After the captain-level Grim Reaper was pitilessly eliminated, the person who appeared in front of us was — His

Eminence Vasco Strada, wielding a longsword that emanated a holy aura!

“Ho, this is…”

After seeing the scene before his eyes, he showed a fearless smile. He had eliminated a captain-level Grim Reaper with a single blow, and that demonstration of his strength left us speechless. Moreover, the sword in His Eminence Strada’s hand was a holy sword that bore a strong resemblance to Durandal. For today’s special training, the plan was for Crom Cruach and His Eminence Strada to arrive a bit later, but it seemed as though they were here now. —The next instant, the horde of Grim Reapers were blasted away by something with a single movement. It was Crom Cruach who had transformed his right arm into a gigantic dragon’s arm. His giant right arm had effortlessly pushed all of the Grim Reapers away.

“…What’s this, are we practising how to defeat Grim Reapers today? Whatever, this isn’t too bad either.”

Aren’t you misunderstanding something!? After losing their leader, and coupled with the appearance of His Eminence Strada and Crom Cruach, the Grim Reapers’ formation was broken and they began to gradually retreat.

<<Retreat!>>

After saying that, they quickly flew towards the empty hole!

“Wait!”

“Hold it right there!”

Xenovia and Irina spread open their wings to pursue them, but Rias stopped them by saying

“You two, don’t follow them!”

After all of the Grim Reapers retreated, Rias sighed as she said

“…I’m already fully aware that Koneko is being targeted by the other side. This is important. And what comes next is to determine the reason — Bennia.”

Rias called Bennia’s name.

“Can I use your channel to that side? I heard from Sona that you have a hidden line that can contact the Netherworld.”

After hearing that, Bennia nodded.

<<I understand. Even I’m losing my patience here. Although it can’t be used too much, I will use it for an emergency like this.>>

Like this, we decided to use Bennia’s channel to directly contact the Netherworld.

[1] Lavinia tends to end almost all of her sentences in ‘nodesu’, which is probably just her style of speech. It makes her sound more natural and curious about everything as the ‘no desu’ puts a slight emphasis on the sentence’s meaning.
[2] Chuunibyou (lit. Middle School 2nd Year Syndrome) is hard to describe, though it would align with someone acting overly obnoxious and confident. Said person may also believe that they are more badass than they actually are and that they also have special powers.
[3] A type of Tsukumogami (possessed tool) found in Japanese folklore.

LIFE.3 THE TRUTH OF THE CATS, AND THE BEGINNING OF THE GAME

Part 1

We returned home from the training space. After leaving the restorations, improvements and subsequent investigations to the Gremory House and the Underworld's government, we returned to the Hyoudou residence. Because the surrounding area had been invaded, several powerful barriers had been erected around the Hyoudou residence, and we also borrowed some guards from the Three Factions as well. In order to prevent ordinary people from noticing, the Devils and Angels standing guard in the garden and at the front gate used techniques to conceal their presence from humans. In order to prevent my parents from being attacked again, they would be accompanied by invisible guards whenever they went out. This was our highest state of alert since the war against Qlippoth. In particular, the guards in our garden were the members of Roygun Belphegor-san's peerage who had come here the other day to join our [Sekiryuutei of Blazing Truth] team. But, as Xenovia also said, it was impossible to cause any harm unless it was a worst-case situation in which our house was attacked by a god-class being of the strongest kind. As for the reason, it was because we still had Ophis and Lilith here. There shouldn't be many gods capable of standing up to the Dragon God sisters. Although they were our last and strongest line of defence, it was still necessary to raise our vigilance given how many times we had been invaded so far. Damn it, where did the information on all of these barriers leak out from!?

Under such circumstances, we gathered in the VIP room as we prepared to contact the Netherworld. It seems like we gather in the VIP room whenever something happens, though this was the original purpose of the room anyway. Bennia generated a communications-type magic circle on the desk, and once we finally made contact with the other side, we began to focus on them. A face from the other side appeared above the magic circle. The projected face was — a Grim Reaper whose skull mask was even more extravagant and majestic than Bennia's. The Grim Reaper who gave off a rather authoritative impression remained expressionless as they spoke.

<<To connect to my line via Apollon…. What's the matter?>>

The way he spoke was calm and yet dignified, as expected of one of the ultimate-class Grim Reapers — Orcus. The person who was face to face with Orcus' projected face was Bennia.

<<Long time no see, papa-dono.>>

—Papa-dono. …The way she addressed him was rather unexpected! I thought so to myself, but the Grim Reaper who was called by that name seemed dumbstruck by the sudden appearance of his daughter, and the expression on his face froze.

<<……>>

After a moment of silence—. Bennia's father completely changed his previously dignified tone and he began to speak in a flustered and overwhelmed manner!

<<B-Bennia-tan, no way, I didn't imagine that you'd be the one to contact me…>>

—Bennia-tan [1]!? …He actually added a ‘tan’ onto the end! I didn’t see that coming at all! His previously majestic atmosphere completely vanished, and he began to dote on his daughter! I’d always thought that Grim Reapers were dangerous and cold people…but it looks like I was wrong about that. Bennia got straight to the point.

<<Papa-dono, I have something to ask you. —We were attacked by Thanatos, would you have any idea about that?>>

<<—Hmm!>>

Orcus seemed somewhat surprised, but after a moment of thought, he said

<<…Thanatos huh. Hmm, I see.>>

Orcus noticed those of us who were standing around Bennia.

<<All of you are members of [DxD], right? My daughter has been in your care. In any case…very well. This is a rare opportunity, so allow me to talk with you for a bit.>>

Orcus then began to speak.

<<Thanatos is an executive of the so-called militant faction. He often takes actions that go beyond the will of Hades-sama, and he hardly ever listens to any of Hades-sama’s orders.>>

Ooh, he said that to us so casually! Perhaps it was because Bennia was present, but I felt moved by the fact that there was a Grim Reaper with whom we were able to communicate with calmly. Rias inquired

“Orcus-sama, do you mean to say that as an ultimate-class Grim Reaper, you’re also unclear on what Thanatos’ motives are?”

<<Ultimate-class Grim Reapers — in other words, the executives of the Netherworld. Because of our respective posts and duties, it is difficult to get away. But, even if we know about some things, we can’t intervene because of our positions.>>

In response to this, Xenovia dejectedly shrugged.

“So that’s why Pluto attacked us during the ‘Demonic Beast Riot’.”

Orcus replied

<<You’ve really hit a sore spot, but the Netherworld is not entirely unified. There is a progressive faction that listens to all of Hades-sama’s orders and acts on them, and there is also a conservative faction that adopts a wait and see approach. I don’t know if you guys will believe this, but I belong to the latter. In any case, we are the gods who manage death in Olympus. Various chain reactions will be set off if I deliberately cause a death.>>

Orcus belonged to the conservative faction—. I chose to believe that, because he was the first decent Grim Reaper that I had seen, and he also acted very courteously. If he’s been able to raise Bennia into what she is, he should be the same as I what I believe…. He probably didn’t allow Bennia to encounter any of those abnormal Grim Reapers in the Netherworld. After the game against the Bael team, I met Hades for the first time in Agreas and had a horrible impression of him, and I was also attacked by Pluto in the Netherworld. —Every single time, I never had a positive impression of the Grim Reapers. Bennia protested to what her father had said

<<Not only are you doing nothing to prevent them from doing these bad things, you're also causing other mythologies to get involved…and you dare to say that you're a member of the conservative faction.>>

Orcus…didn't make any excuses and instead continued

<<…In any case, I'll let you guys know about Thanatos' movements after looking into the matter. After all, my daughter has been in your care, so it's my role as a father to help you guys as well. However, due to the political issues of the Netherworld, our cooperation can't be made public on the surface…. I will also work with the second generation Pluto.>>

It was quite helpful that we had been able to obtain some level of assistance from the Netherworld. It was also an unexpected surprise. I was willing to believe in Bennia's father. If he truly betrayed us, I think Bennia would definitely cut off their father-daughter relationship. But any father who could call their daughter with a 'tan' couldn't possibly be a bad person. However, I was rather curious about one thing that Orcus had mentioned. I quietly asked Kiba who was beside me

(…There's a second generation Pluto?)

Pluto…the first generation had been annihilated by Vali during the 'Demonic Beast Riot'. Kiba quietly answered my question.

(Regardless of the mythology, there are many gods who have children. Even in the case of Bennia-san, she is the child of Orcus.)

Ah, I see. The gods also have children. Regardless of whether it was that old geezer Odin or Zeus, both of them already had kids. Bennia continued to stare at her own father with narrowed eyes.

<<Papa-dono, is Hades-sama thinking about something bad again?>>

Orcus looked directly at his daughter as he said

<<…Bennia-tan, I don't fully understand Hades-sama's way of thinking. But, well, it's best to be wary of Thanatos and Hades-sama. Everyone else, the same goes for you too.>>

"I will remember your advice, but if your leader hears what you just said, won't he punish you?"

After Orcus listened to Rias' question, although his face still remained expressionless, he let out a voice that was tinged with laughter

<<I'll cross that bridge when I come to it. But, it is precisely because the Netheworld is not unified that I can say that, and obviously, Hades-sama has long been quite aware of this.>>

…The Grim Reapers that lived in the Netherworld each had their own unique rules and relationships. The way Hades was perceived was different between us and the Grim Reapers, and even amongst the Grim Reapers, there was a difference between the conservative faction and the militant faction. We gained the cooperation of Bennia's father, Orcus, and he would inform us of any news regarding Thanatos. We were forced to cancel our training session, and just as we were considering what to do next, we received a message from the Sitri peerage. They had found the next Ungaikyo—

Part 2

With me, Rias, Akeno-san, and Ravel in a group, the four of us jumped to the place that Sona-senpai and Shinra-senpai had told us about via a magic circle. The destination was an old shrine that was situated deep in the mountains of the Tohoku region in Japan. We were surrounded by a thick forest that was enveloped in fog. …The fog was enough to make me immediately realise that we had entered a supernatural territory. As the four of us walked into the shrine, we noticed that Sona-senpai and Shinra-senpai were already waiting for us. A gigantic elliptical mirror stood in the centre and gave off an eerie glow — there was a mouth and eyes on the mirror. Sona-senpai said

"This is the current Ungaikyo who has inherited the ability."

After being introduced, the Ungaikyo opened its mouth and spoke as it looked at me with intrigue

<<A dragon with tremendous power.>>

We immediately told the Ungaikyo about the reason why we had come, hoping that it would be able to summon a close relative who knew about the circumstances of Koneko-chan. We didn't bring Koneko-chan with us. It was possible that we would touch on a subject that she was better off not knowing, so we didn't bring her just in case that happened. After all, we were looking for Koneko-chan's parents who had already passed away, or perhaps just one of them. However—.

<<I'm sorry, but I cannot fulfil your request.>>

The response to us was a refusal. We couldn't help but feel confused. After hearing the Ungaikyo's response Sona-senpai quietly murmured

"As expected, it's no good huh."

The Ungaikyo continued

<<Not to mention the living, the secret technique for communicating with the dead is related to the value of my clan. I cannot use it so freely.>>

Shinra-senpai asked

"But the previous generation showed us…"

<<The previous generation is the previous generation, and unlike the previous generation, I will not do everything asked of me. After inheriting this ability that is even watched over by Shaka Nyorai [2] and the Great King Enma [3], I have long wanted to disappear.>>

It actually said the names of Shaka-sama and Enma-sama that I was familiar with. I guess it is a difficult matter to meet with the dead. Ravel said

"Youkai and Devils…once the supernatural die, they are considered to be extinct, so it is very difficult to call their souls out again."

Well, that's true. Koneko-chan's mother was a Nekomata, and that's why it was difficult for this Ungaikyo to summon her. We also wondered about using Valerie's Holy Grail to try…but we gave up on the idea as it might have an adverse effect on Valerie. Awakening someone who was originally dead would certainly have a bad influence on the present world. This was something that I thoroughly understood from the Evil Dragon War. Although I didn't think

Koneko-chan's parents were bad people…doing so would strain Valerie's mind and body, so it was better to give up. Just as we felt troubled by this, a small figure suddenly appeared. It was a calico cat with seven tails. I've seen this cat before! Indeed, this person is—! The calico cat stood in front of the mirror and spoke in a human language.

"Young mirror, could you listen to the request of these children?"

The Ungaikyo appeared to have been startled by the appearance of this cat.

<<M-Magari-sama…>>

The calico cat — the seven-tailed Youkai cat named Magari looked at us.

"Long time no see, Ryuutei boy."

The elder of the cat Youkai, Magari-san! She was an eight hundred year old Youkai! She was one of the Youkai that I had met when we made peace with the Japanese Youkai. Presently, Koneko-chan and Kuroka would occasionally visit her for regular training. If the two of them said that they were going to the mountains, then it was highly likely that they were going to train with Magari-san. Though Kuroka seemed quite reluctant every time!

"Why are you here?"

When I asked, Magari-san squinted as she said

"It's nothing, I just happened to hear that you wanted to find out about the situation behind those sisters, Kuroka and Shirone."

And then Sona-senpai said

“If we’re to find out more about Koneko-san and Kuroka-san’s background, I thought that the power of a cat Youkai elder would be necessary, so I invited her.”

I see, if it’s Magari-san, then I’m sure she’d know about Koneko-chan’s mother. Magari-san said

“As an elder of the cat Youkai, I cannot ignore that matter. So, what will you do, mirror?”

After hearing Magari-san’s words, the current Ungaikyo resolutely answered

<<I understand.>>

It looks like Magari-san has a rather strong influence on the other Youkai. It’s best to rely on other Youkai for these so-called remedies and persuasions I guess. The Ungaikyo accepted our request, allowing us to tell it about the details of Koneko-chan and Kuroka, and then it used its ability to begin searching. The mirror flashed with a radiant glow and the Ungaikyo said

<<…The situation of their parents is quite complicated. The religion that the father’s family belonged to is Buddhism, so it is necessary to perform negotiations with that hell.>>

Speaking of which, the Buddhist and Hindu mythologies also have a Heaven — paradise and hell. Depending on a person’s religion, the place where they would go after death also differed. Magari-san, who seemed to know a bit about the circumstances of Koneko-chan and Kuroka asked

“Can you summon him? I think the mother Fujimai would be more difficult.”

—Fujimai.

So that was the name of Koneko-chan's mother. The Ungaikyo bitterly said

<<The father's side…I don't know what he did during life, but his soul is bound by a troublesome seal. Even if I summon him here, he won't be able to speak very well.>>

There is a seal on the soul of Koneko-chan's father? Just what did he do in life…? Magari-san said to the Ungaikyo

"I guess I'll go and ask Great King Enma for a bit of help."

<<I appreciate it.>>

"Nekomata are often regarded as Youkai who govern the death of humans, so I have had a few meetings with Great King Enma in the past."

Magari-san asked us to prepare a tub filled with water, so I quickly jumped back home and returned with a tub. After the tub was filled with water, Magari-san stared into the depths of the water.

"＿＿"

Her mouth constantly moved as she chanted a long string of incantations. After around ten minutes, Magari-san lifted her head and said to us

"…Apparently, it seems like that side can't do anything about that soul either. It's said that several layers of a Devil's demonic energy combined with a magician's seal have been used together to have that soul sealed. Even Great King Enma's side can't do anything about it."

It looks like this is rather complicated! The matter of Koneko-chan's parents was more serious than I had expected, and the six of us looked at each other with solemn expressions. Magari-san added

"If we could get the cooperation of a Maou-san and a magician's association, there may be some leeway."

Upon hearing this, Rias immediately said

"It's a good thing that we're part of [DxD] right now. I'll go and ask them."

After saying that, everyone except me — Rias, Akeno-san, Ravel, Sona-senpai, and Shinra-senpai used their own respective channels to begin seeking help. While I waited, Magari-san said to me

"Since it will take some time, do you want to summon someone else that you know?"

Someone I know can also be summoned with the Ungaikyo? Rias created a magic circle while she said to me

"That's right, Ise, your grandpa has already passed away, right? Your family is also Buddhist, so couldn't you summon him?"

"J-Jii-chan? Ah, I see, I could summon him."

I'll have the Ungaikyo summon jii-chan! While we were discussing the wedding ceremonies, jii-chan had also become one of the topics of conversation. …My grandfather. It had already been quite a while since he passed. …When I recalled the smile of jii-chan when he was alive, I felt like I wanted to see him again even more. If it's possible, then I really do want to see him. The Ungaikyo said

<<If you want me to call him here, then tell me his name and the address of the house where he lived. That will make him easier to find.>>

So if I tell it that then I'll be able to summon jii-chan huh. Since it's a rare opportunity, I'll guess I'll make use of it.

"Well, I'll respectfully accept the offer. Umm—"

After I made up my mind, I told the Ungaikyo about jii-chan's details. The Ungaikyo went silent for a while—.

"Connected. Then, I will now reflect the image of the Sekiryuutei's grandfather."

After saying that, the reflection of my face in the mirror began to warp. Waaah! It's starting! So it's possible for someone to be summoned so quickly if they don't do anything problematic in their lifetime! I hurriedly sat down in front of the mirror in seiza [4]! I-I feel a bit nervous! The next second — a voice came from the mirror.

[—ai—. —Oppa—]

"J-Jii-chan..?"

I tried to speak—.

[Zoom zoom iyaan!]

The figure of a familiar old man was reflected while he sang a familiar song in the mirror! He was an old man whose face was really similar to both mine and tou-san's — it really was jii-chan! Jii-chan looked at me, and he still had that same familiar smile as he said

[Long time no see, Ise! You've gotten bigger! Are you well?]

…….

Uuh, it's jii-chan! It's jii-chan's voice and face! It's the same as when he was alive. Faced with this unprecedented development, I let out manly tears of joy!

"Uuh, jii-chan! It really is jii-chan! Mmm, I'm doing well! But, why are you singing that song?"

The tune that jii-chan was singing along to was the 'Oppai Dragon' song, and I just couldn't help but ask. Jii-chan heartily laughed

[Hahahahaha! Word of your deeds have reached even Buddha-sama's world! Lately, I'm always being summoned by the Bodhisattva-samas [5] to receive praise! The more active you become in the current world, the more comfortable I become over here! After all, I received the title of being the Sekiryuutei's grandfather after dying! With the Oppai Dragon song in the background, I've been singing and dancing every day in a blissful world!]

Jii-chan spoke with the same fiery enthusiasm that he had when he was alive. I see, so I've become famous even in the world of Buddha-sama! In that case, jii-chan already knows my true identity…. The Sekiryuutei's grandfather huh, this has become quite amazing…. And over on that side, he constantly uses my song as a background tune to sing and dance along to! Jii-chan then explained to me that in the paradise of the Buddhist world, the Sekiryuutei — my successes were widely renowned, and they knew everything about my battle against Qlippoth. Almost all of the gods and goddesses knew, and famous gods would come to visit every odd day to ask about my childhood. I suppose it isn't a bad thing that my activities have allowed jii-chan to feel comfortable after his death, right? Jii-chan who was enjoying his life in paradise spoke to Rias who was beside me

[The one on that side, are you one of Ise's future brides? It's nice to meet you, I'm Ise's grandfather.]

"Ah, yes, it's nice to meet you too. I'm Rias Gremory, ojii-sama."

Rias greeted jii-chan like that. He even knows that she's one of my future wives! …He really does know everything about me. Jii-chan looked at Rias' — chest, and then he also looked the chest of Akeno-san who wasn't too far away. He nodded many times with a satisfied smile.

[Mmm! Mmmhmm! Ise! When you were young, you always said 'I want to marry an onee-san with big oppai', and now that dream of yours is going to come true! Regardless of whether it's that red-haired girl or the ponytailed girl, both of them have splendid oppai! When your grandmother was young, she also had lovely oppai, but those two don't lose to your grandmother!]

Jii-chan said—.

<<It's almost time. I'll be scolded by Great King Enma, so please say goodbye.>>

After such a brief period, the Ungaikyo conveyed that our time was up.

"Eh? Already!?"

I was surprised! I only got to listen to jii-chan's proud achievements!? Rias said to me

"Religions are quite strict when it comes to speaking with the dead. You're also a Devil, so it would've been impossible for you to contact the Buddhist world originally."

…Indeed I…have reincarnated into a Devil, and I was now a high-class Devil of the Gremory peerage, and I belonged to the mythology of the Bible, Christianity. Although our time for parting had come, jii-chan was still so cheerful.

[We haven't spoken enough, but we may have the chance to see each other again in the future. Don't worry, if anything happens, jii-chan will go over to help you, so leave it to me! Ise!]

"A-Alright."

Jii-chan made oppai-groping gestures in the air as he said

[—Feel as many oppai as you can. When I was young, a lot of oppai—]

Before he could finish, the communication was cut off.

<<The line has expired. I'm sorry, but that's as far as we can go.>>

I grabbed the sides of the Ungaikyo and appealed to jii-chan!

"What happened when you were young!? What kind of oppai did you see!? Jii-chaaaan!"

Damn it! He's still such a perverted jii-chan! But, he's still so energetic! If my current activities can allow jii-chan to live comfortably after death, I'll be proud of that and do even more! Like this, my brief reunion with jii-chan ended—.

After Rias gained the cooperation of the other factions, we spoke to the Ungaikyo again.

"—It looks like they'll help. The magic seal will be analysed with their techniques."

The Ungaikyo then said

<<It looks like we'll manage somehow.>>

And then prepared to use its ability again.

<<Because the memories of the soul have been subjected to a powerful seal, they may not be normal. And because they are also deceased, they may not give you an accurate response, so please keep that in mind.>>

After saying that, it used its ability again, and that person was reflected in the mirror. …Based on the information that we had obtained beforehand, Koneko-chan and Kuroka's father was a human. However, they weren't a hybrid of a human and a Nekomata. A special characteristic of the Nekomata was that they could reproduce with other supernatural races, but if it was a human, then the child born from them would still be a Nekomata. If they mated with races other than humans, then the child born from them would have the characteristics of that race. That was why Kuroka pushed herself onto me and Vali, she hoped to obtain the strong genes of a dragon. The surface of the mirror was almost like the screen of a television, it was rather grainy and difficult to see the person on the other side. It was completely different to when I saw jii-chan just a moment ago.

[…I-I am…I-I am…]

They finally spoke…but there was too much fuzziness and I couldn't hear them properly. The Ungaikyo added

<<It seems like he's even forgotten his own name. His speech is also fragmented, so he can probably only listen.>>

…Why is it like this? Just what did he do? Rias faced the man who didn't even have a clear appearance and said

"Toujou…no, do you remember the Nekomata sisters Shirone and Kuroka?"

There was a brief silence. The fuzzy voice then responded

[…Neko-mata…Fujimai…]

It seemed as though he could still remember his wife's name…but Koneko-chan and Kuroka — he seemed to have forgotten the names of his daughters? Magari-san asked

"That's right. They're the Nekomata that you took away. …What did you do to those girls? No, this is how I should ask. What did you do to those children after taking them away to that place?"

And then we — learned the shocking truth.

[……Took them to…the Naberius House…. There…I…wanted…to make Super Devils [6]…acquired artificial methods, to make modified Devils…I did that kind of…research…]

……Super Devils, artificial methods, and modified Devils…?

"Super Devils can be made artificially!?"

I couldn't help but cry out! Koneko-chan's father was associated with the research that Kuroka's former master of the branch family of the Naberius House conducted…? And that research was on — artificially producing Super Devils after birth…! T-This is somewhat beyond what we envisioned, isn't it? Neither Rias, Akeno-san, Ravel, Sona-senpai, nor Shinra-senpai had imagined that this would be the

case, and they were all extremely shocked. Rias narrowed her eyes as she said

"…It looks like we've stepped into an area that people should not encroach upon."

…That seems to be the case. This is super top secret research. Ah, so that's why the Maou-sama's soldiers rushed over to destroy most of the research material. Someone felt that something was amiss, and that's why the order was given for it to be destroyed. As the topic began to veer towards a bad direction, I couldn't help but feel my heartbeat accelerating. A small portion of the higher-ups in the Underworld were aware of the internal situation, and that's why certain theories emerged and they wanted to get rid of Kuroka and Koneko-chan. It would have been troublesome if the top secret research in artificially creating Super Devils after birth was not completely erased. Koneko-chan's father continued.

[That was…the wish of that person of the Naberius House…and also the external…order…from…Nebiros.]

"Nebiros…! That name has actually come up here…!"

Rias and the others were highly surprised. Aside from me, it seemed like all of the Devils knew about that name. Seeing my confused expression, Rias explained

"…You know that the Lucifugus House served the first-generation Lucifers, right? In ancient times, there were a total of six Houses, including Lucifugus that served the Lucifers."

Those six Houses were Lucifugus, Agaliarept, Satanachia, Fleurety, Sargatanas and Nebiros. Some of those families are still surviving today, though there were also some families that cut off contact with

the government in the previous Devil Civil War and have gone missing. And Nebiros was one of those unknown missing houses. Sona-senpai spoke in a speculative tone whilst holding her hand to her chin

"…The branch family of Naberius and Nebiros were connected…. I've heard rumours that during the Great War of the Three Factions, the vassals of the Nebiros House included the Naberius House."

Koneko-chan's father continued to speak in a broken manner.

[…Fujimai was a good Nekomata…research on creating artificial Super Devils…not only did she help me…she herself…also seemed to have fallen in love with me…and would do anything I said.]

It seemed as though Koneko-chan's mother helped her husband with his research. I asked Magari-san

"Did you know about this?"

"I didn't know about it in such detail. However, I only knew that Fujimai fell in love with a human who researched bad things. I also advised her not to continue."

…I see. It looks like Koneko-chan's mother fell in love with a bad person. I had something worrying on my mind, so I asked that person

"U-Umm, Kone — Shirone and Kuroka, the names of these two Nekomata…they're the children you had with Fujimai-san, don't you remember!?"

After a moment of silence, he replied to me

[…Now that you mention it…Fujimai…indeed birthed two cats.]

—What! …O-Of course! That's not going to change! He actually said two-hiki [7]! Isn't that way too strange!? I couldn't resist grabbing the mirror and shouting

"Don't you remember!? The sisters, they're cute girls, one with black ears and a tail, and the other with snow-white ears and a tail! Aren't they your daughters!?"

[…I can't remember…their names…I can't recall either…though now that you mention it, Fujimai did indeed mention such names…]

…….

……I-I can't possibly forgive such words…. His wife…no, he took the Nekomata away for research…he clearly had children, but didn't even know. Correction, he didn't acknowledge them. …Something like this, there's no way I can tell Koneko-chan…. …Your father used your mother for the sake of his research, and although he was your father, he can hardly remember anything about you…! I was already shivering and burning with rage. Ravel also held my hand with a sorrowful expression. Ravel felt the same as me. Koneko-chan's father continued

[…That's right, I remember one thing…Fujimai…gave the hair ornament to…the black cat…in case anything happened…to hide the research results…the one who knows this…Naberius…and that person…Nebiros'…]

Koneko-chan's hair ornament matched this information—. That cat-shaped hairclip was actually meant to hide the research results…? Rias and Sona-senpai seemed to have reached a conclusion.

“The reason why the Grim Reapers are targeting Koneko-chan is…because of that. That girl’s hair ornament has always been treated as a memento of her mother.”

“Thanatos’ aim is probably the research on artificially creating Super Devils. Although we don’t know where he heard this information from, it’s at least a great step forward now that we know the reason.”

It was indeed a good harvest to find out about Thanatos’ motive. …Though I couldn’t say anything because I was still in shock…. However, I was curious about something, so I asked Rias

“Koneko-chan’s hairclip, didn’t you give that to her, Rias? In the past, Koneko-chan told me that she got it from you.”

“The one she normally wears is the one that I gave her. But she also has another one. I didn’t want to damage that memento, so I made a replica to give to her. Mementos should be cherished.”

So that’s how it is. I learned another thing about Koneko-chan. The Ungaikyo said

<<Time is almost up, I need to disconnect.>>

In the mirror, Koneko-chan’s father—.

[…Ah, that research…what happened? After I died…were there any results…? …Anyone…. …Create Super Devils aside from Rizevim, Sirzechs, Ajuka…artificial Super Devils…please…]

The Ungaikyo’s ability was cut off, and our conversation with Koneko-chan’s father also ended. Until the very end…he was still just a man who only cared for his research—. After the conversation with him ended, we began to discuss the future.

“Koneko-chan’s hairclip conceals research data on how to artificially produce Super Devils after birth, and just knowing this is an improvement…!”

In any case, we should communicate this matter to a trustworthy organisation and then allow them to analyse the information. Beelzebub-sama and the Grigori should be quite suitable. Everyone nodded in agreement with that suggestion. Whilst half-filled with the joy of reuniting with jii-chan, and also half-filled with the sorrow of hearing the story of Koneko-chan’s father, we embarked on our journey back—.

Part 3

After returning to the Hyoudou residence, we told our comrades about what we had just learned. As for Koneko-chan, we avoided mentioning her father, we simply said that Koneko-chan’s parents once conducted research on artificially creating Super Devils and also talked about how to deal with that hair accessory. To Koneko-chan, this was a memento of her mother, but Koneko-chan agreed to hand it over, so we decided to lend the hairclip to Ajuka Beelzebub-sama.

“Is this really okay?”

“Is it okay?”

Rias and I were both worried about Koneko-chan who had to hand over her memento. But, Koneko-chan smiled as she replied

“It’s okay. Because I still have the hairclip that Rias-neesama gave me.”

—She answered. …We hadn’t told her about the truth of her father…. An important game was coming up soon, so how could I tell

her something like that? But, even if there wasn't going to be a game, I don't think I couldn't bring myself to tell her that…! An ill feeling swirled around within my heart. Just at that time, Kuroka and Le Fay returned to the Hyoudou residence. There was a fair period of time during which we were unable to contact Kuroka and the others. Upon asking about the reason—.

"We…went to a place that was in the depths of China's Youkai world."

Le Fay answered. After asking further, it turned out that they had gone to train with their team's current Zhu Bajie and current Sha Wujing. They also had a large-scale battle with the Bull Demon King's [8] faction! There was a so-called riot that occurred. Because the Bull Demon King was rampaging over there, they deliberately went to the location of the riot so that they could supress it and at the same time, also enhance the cohesion of their team. After we told Kuroka about the Grim Reapers' attack on Koneko-chan, she was rather surprised. She lightly pulled on Koneko-chan's cheeks.

"Well, it looks like you're okay. I'm relieved nyan."

"…Nya, pwease stwap."

With her cheeks being pulled on by her older sister, her face seemed to be filled with displeasure. Rias said

"Thanatos is also after you, Kuroka, but I don't think he expected that you would go to the depths of China to fight against the Bull Demon King."

Since Thanatos was currently searching for that research data, it was certain that he was targeting both Koneko-chan and Kuroka. He only attacked us because he already knew where we were.

“Kuroka, could I speak to you for a bit?”

“Arara, it looks like a serious story.”

Afterwards, Rias called only Kuroka over to a separate room to tell her the truth—.

That night—.
The match between Rias’ team and Vali’s team was about to begin, and so I asked the girls around the house if they had seen Kuroka. After finding out that Kuroka had been seen on the rooftop, I went towards the roof of my house—. Kuroka was sitting on top of the roof, enjoying the cool night breeze. When I approached, Kuroka noticed me and then said

“Sekiryuutei-chan also knows about our father huh.”

“Yeah.”

“For now, please don’t tell Shirone. Shirone has always believed that our mother fell in love and became pregnant with us, but then died in an accident.”

“Koneko-chan…she doesn’t know about the truth of her parents at all…?”

Kuroka shook her head. The expression on her face was clouded in mystery.

“…Sekiryuutei-chan, you spoke with that person…our father through the Ungaikyo right? So you should understand. He isn’t a good person. He wasn’t even aware of the fact that we had been born in the past. I heard a lot of things from the Naberius House afterwards. He was a man who was very passionate about research. No—”

With eyes full of love and hate, Kuroka declared

“He was only interested in research, and anything outside of that wasn’t visible to him.”

Kuroka looked up at the sky as she continued

“Even our mother who gave birth to me and Shirone was also…it was only the result of a man who was carried away by a fit of lust and vented on a Nekomata. What’s more troubling is that our mother left us and ran off with that man.”

Koneko-chan and Kuroka’s mother — Fujimai-san, she had taken her daughters to see their father several times, but their father remained indifferent. Ultimately, due to a large-scale experiment, Fujimai-san was unable to bring Koneko-chan and Kuroka along, so all she could do was entrust them to that man’s former association — a research facility run by the House of Naberius’ branch family. And then — due to an accident caused by an experimental failure, both she and her husband lost their lives. With their mother unable to return back to their side, Koneko-chan and Kuroka both lost someone to depend on.

“In the end, both of our parents died because of an explosion in the experiment nyan.”

But the story didn’t end there. The Devil of the Naberius House’s branch family still continued the research.

“After the Naberius House learned about the loss of those two, they persuaded us to become their servants. …Back then, I had no family nor power, so the option to refuse didn’t exist.”

So that she could allow her little sister to have enough food, Kuroka became a servant Devil. Afterwards, when Kuroka awakened her powers, she killed her master and became a target of the Underworld's government. Kuroka's eyes were filled with sorrow.

"Fujimai…I still remember when mother introduced me and the infant Shirone to that man. …Mother thought that we were the children born from her and her loved one, and she hoped that he would want to see us…but that man wasn't interested at all. We were his children, but unless he was told, he probably wouldn't have known."

After saying that much, Kuroka's eyes lost their lustre.

"No, that man should've known. But he pretended not to know. …Aside from research, any other existence was simply in the way…. Mother temporarily entrusted us to someone else so that she could be with that man. She didn't go after that man so that she could abandon us, she did so because she wanted that man to acknowledge me and Shirone."

In regards to this, Magari-san had also told me about it

[Fujimai…among the Nekomata, she was a child who excelled in senjutsu. But, although she was good at it, she was a kind and gentle child who didn't like fighting.]

…In any case, she wanted the man that she loved to acknowledge the daughters between them…. That was why she continued to follow him. Kuroka knew everything about her parents so very clearly. Even though she was normally smiling and quite laid-back, she knew about such things so thoroughly….

“…You already understand this so well, so why didn’t you tell Koneko-chan about your mother?”

“It’s precisely because I know that I don’t tell her. …If I talk about our mother, then it definitely involves our father, right? Shirone…is very weak. Although she’s very strong, she can also be quite weak…”

Kuroka — hugged me and whispered

“…Please Sekiryuutei-chan. …I want to keep living here with Shirone in peace. Of course I’ll also make amends for all of the trouble that I’ve given you so far, and I’ll also fight against the threats that may come in the future with you. But, aside from that…I just want to live on normally in peace and quiet…”

This bad cat was always so mischievous, but now that she was in my arms, she seemed so delicate and so small. I quietly held her in my arms, and then said

“Yeah, I understand. If you like, you can stay here as long as you want, also—”

I readily asserted

“No matter if it’s you or Koneko-chan who gets threatened, I’ll rise up to fight. Because we’re family who are living together.”

After hearing my words, Kuroka—.

“Ahaha, that’s really something that you can say as a high-class Devil. …Then, I’ll stay by your side. As your family.”

After frivolously saying that, Kuroka added in a rather charming manner—.

“Please let me stay like this for a while.”

After speaking to Kuroka, I decided to go take a bath to relax and change my mood, so that was why I came to the large underground bath. Because our house had become so large, we even had a large shared bath, and being able to privately enjoy it by myself at night was a rather pleasurable thing. Being able to have a mixed bath with the girls is nice too though. I really welcome it! Occasionally, we even help each other wash our bodies (of course, the girls always say 'me too', so it becomes quite hectic). It's the best! But I still have to say, in such a large bath, it's also great when I can enjoy it all to myself! At public baths and hot spring resorts, it's very rare to encounter a situation like this where one person can have it all to themselves. So when there's such a large bath in my own house, sometimes I want to enjoy it alone! I really just want to occupy the centre of the bath, or even have a swim, even though it isn't very courteous. I just want to relax for a moment. Well, it's nice to change my mood before something major happens. Although there were a lot of people who lived at my house, I roughly knew what time everyone took a bath. At this time, there shouldn't be anyone else here to take a bath. I neatly took my clothes off in the dressing room, and began to hum a tune as I walked towards the large bath, and then sat under a shower head. After noticing that the shampoo was completely used up, I had no choice but to reach over to grab the shampoo from the adjacent wash area—.

"…Here you go."

A bottle of shampoo was placed into my hand accompanied by someone's voice.

"Ah, thank you!"

After I replied like that—. I suddenly came back to my senses and looked to my side — a completely naked Koneko-chan was standing

there! I hadn't felt her presence at all, and that's why I thought I was the only person here! I should have paid more attention to the dressing room! Her small oppai were laid bare before my eyes! Koneko-chan shyly murmured

"…I was originally in a corner of the bath, where I wouldn't have been seen…. And then I heard Ise-senpai humming as you came in here…"

I-I see! Koneko-chan was so small, and she was also in a place that was invisible from the entrance, so that's why I didn't notice! After saying that, Koneko-chan went back into the bath again. So she got up just to give me the shampoo huh. It feels a bit awkward…. I quickly washed my head and body down and then sank into the bath, a slight distance away from Koneko-chan. There was an awkward air between the two of us…. After I made up my mind, I began a conversation with Koneko-chan.

"…Koneko-chan, the game is quite soon isn't it?"

Koneko-chan looked at me with earnestness.

"Yes, I am Rias-neesama's [Rook] and also her family. So that's why I'll definitely allow her to win."

And then a sense of determination began to fill her pupils.

"I'll also defeat Kuroka-neesama."

But, once she said up to there, she revealed a complex expression.

"…Although I've reconciled with Kuroka-neesama, I can't say that all of the grudges between us are gone. To erase all of the thoughts that I had back then…is indeed impossible. But Kuroka-neesama is

still the same gentle Kuroka-neesama as back then, and just knowing that is enough."

She was talking about how Kuroka killed her former master. Koneko-chan already understood that it was done for the sake of protecting her. But the fear that she felt back then was genuine. Koneko-chan truly felt afraid of her sister, of a Nekomata's power. Koneko-chan clenched her fists and said

"…The fear, sadness, loneliness and despair that I felt back then…is something that Rias-neesama and everyone else helped me to dissolve little by little…and to completely overcome it — in order to surpass my past self, I have to defeat Kuroka-neesama fairly."

The fear that she felt back then — only by facing Kuroka and fighting against her could she overcome the past and eliminate it.

In order to surpass her past self—.

"Hmm, if Koneko-chan has made up her mind, then I'll be rooting for you. Though I'll also have to cheer for Kuroka as well."

Koneko-chan laughed quietly and then said

"Yes, please be sure to cheer for Kuroka-neesama as well. …But, I hope that you'll be able to cheer for me a bit more than her."

After that, we fell into a brief silence again. The first to speak up was Koneko-chan.

"…Do you know about what happened with father and mother?"

—Hmm. …Koneko-chan is asking me about her parents huh. I — nodded without making any excuses. Koneko-chan looked up at the ceiling as she said

“Kuroka-neesama has always been quite vague on what kind of people they were…. But even if she doesn’t tell me, I more or less understood. …In any case, that’s the kind of people they were, and that’s why Kuroka-neesama doesn’t want to tell me, but I had somewhat realised that already.”

“Koneko-chan, but your mother—”

I wanted to at least tell her about that, but Koneko-chan — shook her head. With a radiant smile, Koneko-chan said to me

“It’s fine if you don’t tell me. Because I’m happy right now. I have so many sisters around me, and Yuuto-senpai is like a brother. I’ve made so many friends, and most importantly…there’s also someone that I love.”

With her cheeks dyed slightly red, Koneko-chan said to me

“With so many family members around me, I can fight well. I can live well.”

Kuroka—. Koneko-chan is strong. She’s stronger than you think. No, she’s become strong. Because she has Rias and us all by her side—. One day, even if we tell her about the truth of her parents, I think she’ll definitely be able to accept it. If it’s from me…then indeed, that won’t do. Kuroka should be the one to say it. Koneko-chan waded through the bath, and gradually drew near me, little by little. She faced me and asked

“Ise-senpai, do you still remember what happened during the [Demonic Beast Riot]? What I said.”

—When I grow bigger, please allow me to become your bride.

Back then, that was what Koneko-chan said to me. Of course, there was no way that I could forget.

“Of course, I remember that clearly.”

Koneko-chan’s face turned completely red as she loudly declared to me

“When that time comes, please give me an answer.”

After saying that, she quickly climbed out of the bath and headed towards the dressing room.

“Also, Rias-neesama is in the sauna room!”

After saying that, she left me alone in the bath! Just as Koneko-chan had mentioned, I peered towards the sauna room — and I happened to see Rias who had just opened the door and come out completely naked! No matter how many times I see those enormous oppai of hers, I never feel satisfied because it’s such a stunning sight to see those pretty pink tips! In my eyes, she also had perfect thighs, and her gorgeous body was the ultimate eye candy!

“I’m sorry, I didn’t plan on eavesdropping…but I just couldn’t find the right timing to come out.”

She said that as she walked over towards the showers to wash down her sweat. She then stepped in to join me in the bath. It just so happened that the game was about to begin soon, so this was a good opportunity for us to talk.

“I’ll be cheering for you in the game. Well, you knew that anyway.”

“Ufufu, of course I know.”

Rias winked at me, and then undauntedly said

“Don’t hate me even if I defeat your destined opponent, okay?”

“If that really happens, I think it’ll be a very interesting development.”

After saying that…I felt as though the atmosphere between us gradually evolved in a good direction. And like that, we moved closer to each other, and just as our lips were about to touch—.

“It’s nice to have a bath in the middle of the night too!”

“That’s true! I was angry when you suddenly dragged me up to take a bath, but now that I think about it, having a late-night bath is also nice!”

“…I’m very sleepy, but I’ll accompany you guys.”

The Church Trio composed of Xenovia, Irina and Asia (sleepy mode) came in! The three of them were all startled upon seeing us.

“I-It’s so late, and yet you’re having a naked tryst with each other in the bath!?”

“No way, so something like this was going on!?”

“O-Oneesama! Sorry for bothering you!”

As the situation unfolded, Rias and I couldn’t help but look at each other and laugh out loud. In the end, I wasn’t able to enjoy the large bath by myself…but I was able to listen to Koneko-chan’s thoughts, and give words of support to Rias, so I felt good about that—.

Part 4

And then, it was finally the day of the match between Rias' team and Vali's team—. In order to cheer Rias on, and also to act as a guard, I arrived at the venue of the game. The venue for the game was the newly constructed stadium in the Fallen Angels' territory of the Underworld — [Fafnir Stadium]. This name came from the Dragon King who had once helped Azazel-sensei in the past. At the entrance, there was a golden statue of Fafnir and Azazel-sensei wearing his Down Fall Dragon Another Armour. …As soon as I saw this, I knew it was one of sensei's own proposals. His style is way too conspicuous! That's right, the reason why we came here to act as guards was also due to some advice that Ikuse-san had given us.

[I've received news that the Grim Reapers of Thanatos' faction are targeting the game between Rias Gremory's team and Vali's team. Although its authenticity hasn't yet been confirmed…it's possible that they may attack, based on my experience in working behind the scenes.]

…I also felt that something seemed amiss, so I came along with all of my team members whilst remaining cautious. It would be best if nothing happens. The live broadcast of the game could also be watched on a mobile phone. Damn it! I wanted to see the game with my own eyes, but all I can do is watch the broadcast on my phone now! But it's worth it if this will allow Rias and Vali to have a smooth game. Because the information wasn't confirmed, the game hadn't been cancelled. Of course, there was also tight security for every match in the Tournament. In the unlikely event that something does happen, the game will be suspended, and our team would join Rias and Vali to fight against Thanatos' faction. However, since this was a

major match, it would be for the best if the two of them and the audience could enjoy it as much as possible. That's why this is a top secret mission of [DxD]. Our opponents are Thanatos' faction. …I don't know if they'll come yet, but if they do, I'll definitely defeat them! On that topic, we don't have any assistance from Sairaorg-san or Dulio this time. They originally wanted to come over as well, but because the mysterious Devils were causing trouble in the areas under their jurisdiction, they couldn't afford to spare any assistance. The Sitri peerage had also been attacked by the mysterious Devils while protecting Kuoh Town, so they remained in the human realm. However, they were fortunately still able to lend Bennia to us. Hence, we would have to deal with this matter on our own. We might have to fight against those who can break through the barriers again. Just what kind of technique are they using to pass through the barriers at the various locations? The members of our [Sekiryuutei of Blazing Truth] gathered in the vicinity of the venue (Bova maintained his mini-dragon form). Although we weren't currently participating in a match or training, Bina-shi and Roygun Belphegor-san also came to join us. I thanked Roygun-san

"I'm so sorry, even though the news hasn't been confirmed yet, I still insisted on standing guard here. And you accepted that to join us as well."

Roygun-san smiled as she answered me

"No, it's okay. I have plenty of time anyway. Moreover, if nothing happens, then that's for the best, isn't it?"

Just as we were about to decide on our placement of guards—.

"I've also come to help, Hyoudou Issei-kun."

—While saying that, the people who appeared before us were Ikuse-san and several other agents!

“Ikuse-san!”

After Ikuse-san told the black dog — Jin to sit down, he said to us

“Since our opponents are experts in assault and assassination, you guys will also need the experts in hunting them down.”

Ikuse-san glanced up at the stadium and smiled as he said

“Also — I don’t want to see any unnecessary interruptions creep into Vali and the others’ game.”

Yeah! That’s really encouraging to hear! The Slash Dog team has come along to help us in protecting the venue!

“Exactly! We can’t let them get in the way of Va-kun’s game.”

The person who said that was a beautiful blonde-haired witch who wore a white witch’s hat and a robe — Lavinia Reni-san. The next person who greeted us was a beautiful and high-spirited onee-san who had her hair tied back and wore an agent’s uniform.

“My name is Minagawa Natsume! So you’re Oppai Dragon-kun? I really wanted to meet you! I’ve been following all of your TV shows, you know?”

After her, the next person to greet us was a brown-haired man with a white cat sitting atop his shoulder. He was a handsome dude who looked like a delinquent.

“Ah—, my name is Samejima Kouki. Well, I also like big breasts I guess.”

Minagawa-san tightened the grip of her hand around Samejima-san's head and then said

"There are still a few other official members of the team. We'll introduce them to you all later."

Although the Slash Dog team had come over to help us, I still intended to decline the offer.

"Ikuse-san, this is something we're doing on our own. We only came to guard this place because we worried that the game could be subject to an attack. …You guys are all important agents of the Grigori, so I'd feel bad if you guys came to guard this place with us when we don't even know if there will be any enemy activity—"

Before I could finish, Ikuse-san interrupted me

"We're here to accompany you. It's precisely because you guys plan on doing your best that we decided to accompany you. What I said earlier was also my intuition."

"—."

…I was speechless. All members of the Slash Dog team also nodded in agreement with their leader. Their enthusiasm really moved me! Ikuse-san said

"Before Azazel left, he also said this to me. —You should join their adventures sometimes."

Samejima-san stroked the head of the small cat on his shoulder as he said

"The Nekomata girls are being targeted by the Grim Reapers, so as men, we have to fight back against those Grim Reapers with

everything that we've got. As a cat user, I'll definitely help you guys out."

Minagawa-san also nodded enthusiastically

"Yep, that's right, we may be a special task force specialised in spying and assassination, but we've always enjoyed having passionate battles!"

Ikuse-san stuck his fist out.

"Let's allow them to have a wonderful showdown. It's up to you and us to protect them. It'll be best if nothing happens. But in the off-chance that something does—"

I also stuck my fist out and bumped with Ikuse-san's fist.

"We'll beat them down."

"We'll cut them down."

Ikuse-san and I declared at the same time as we made up our minds! Like this, we guarded the venue along with the team led by Ikuse-san to deal with the enemy whom we still weren't sure would show up yet, Thanatos—. I hope you guys will have a wonderful game. —Vali, Rias!

[1] The –tan honorific is a more affectionate and moe variant of –chan.
[2] Another name for the Gautama Buddha.
[3] A god in Buddhist mythology who is said to be the king or judge of hell.
[4] A formal sitting position that would convey respect in this

situation.

[5] A being dedicated to Buddhahood. They could also be termed as an ‘enlightened one’.

[6] Super Devils are also known as ‘Transcendent Beings’.

[7] This is something that gets lost in translation. The ‘hiki’ is used when counting small animals and shows here that the father saw them as nothing more than that. In English, the closest thing might be a ‘litter’ of kittens.

[8] A demon king from Journey to the West whose true form is that of a giant white bull. Originally a sworn-brother of Sun Wukong, they later end up as enemies.

TEAM MEMBER

- Registered members of the [Rias Gremory] team in the Tournament
  - King — Rias Gremory
  - Queen — Himejima Akeno
  - Rook — Toujou Koneko
  - Rook — Vasco Strada
  - Knight — Kiba Yuuto
  - Knight — Lint Sellzen
  - Bishop — Gasper Vladi
  - Bishop — Valerie Tepes
  - Pawn [8] — Mr. Black (Crom Cruach)
- Registered members of the [Hakuryuukou of the Morning Star] team in the Tournament
  - King — Vali Lucifer
  - Queen — Fenrir
  - Rook — Gogmagog
  - Rook — (Current) Zhu Bajie

- Knight — Arthur Pendragon
- Knight — (Current) Sha Wujing
- Bishop — Kuroka
- Bishop — Le Fay Pendragon
- Pawn [5] — Bikou
- Pawn [3] — Unregistered

At the nearest vending machine from the player's waiting room in [Fafnir Stadium], Vali inserted his coins so that he could buy something to drink. After putting in the correct amount of change, Vali was just about to press the button of the sports drink that he wanted to have, but he was beaten to it by a slender finger that reached over from the side. After taking the plastic bottle out of the pickup tray, that person offered it to Vali.

"Va-kun, you choose that drink every time you have an important battle."

The person who held out the drink was — a witch who wore a white cloak, Lavinia Reni. She was a woman who couldn't possibly be any more familiar with Vali.

"…You also came huh."

Lavinia replied to Vali with a gentle smile.

"I came."

After Vali received the plastic bottle from her, Lavinia said

"In comparison to Va-kun, there might be more members of [DxD] who are cheering for the princess-sama of the Gremory House. After all, not long ago, Va-kun was still doing bad things."

Vali thought to himself that Lavinia still talked to him in the same old way that she always had.

"I don't need anyone's support…"

Vali quietly said. Lavinia's hands suddenly reached over towards his face. Lavinia held Vali's face and smiled as she said

"—I will always be on your side, okay Va-kun? That's why I'll be cheering for you."

—Her gentle and calming smile is still the same as ever.

To Vali, ever since his mother…aside from his mother, this was the gentlest womanly smile that he had seen. Vali broke free, and turned around.

"…You can do whatever you like."

He impatiently answered her.

"I will. But, I need to do a bit of work while I cheer for you…"

"Work?"

Vali felt as though something had happened as he turned to look back…her smile was still just as soothing.

"You don't have to worry, okay?"

Vali realised that trying to pursue the matter any further would not result in a satisfactory reply to him.

"…I see. Then, I'm going. Thanks for the drink."

Vali walked back towards the waiting room.

"Do your best, Va-kun."

Although Lavinia's words of support echoed from behind him, Vali continued to move forward without concern. When he had almost

arrived back to the waiting room, Albion laughed lightly as he asked Vali

[Fufufu, how does it feel to have your princess cheering for you?]

“Whatever.”

She was the first woman who had responded to him with a smile aside from his mother—. The support from that person seemed so dazzling, warm and privileged.

SLASH.1 BEHIND THE GAME — SEKIRYUUTEI AND SLASH DOG'S UNITED FRONT—

We dispersed around the venue according to the plan that Ravel had come up with, and whilst we get ready to respond in case of an attack, an explanation of the rules of the game was in progress.

<<The rules are — BOARD COLLAPSE!>>

On the huge screens that were set up around the venue, the decided ruleset was announced.

<<This is a rule which means that the field will begin to collapse starting from both ends.>>

The commentators discussed the rules with each other live.

<<That's right. Both ends of the venue will collapse at the same time, and according to these rules, only the centre will remain at the end.>>

The rule meant that the field would gradually disappear from both edges. We had also played under this rule in the past.

<<The narrowing of the field means that the places to hide and escape will also disappear, and by the end, battle will be inevitable.>>

<<Holding a battle in a confined space means that there's a greater chance for friendly fire or getting hit by a stray attack, so a key point

of this match will be to set up an advantage while the field is still wide.>>

Even if there was a clear gap in strength between the two teams, if an advantage was established before the field collapsed, the battle would become even more intense, and the narrowing of the field would undoubtedly affect the situation of the battle.

<<However, because this is a standard rule, there is no doubt that the overall strength of a team is more important than strategy here!>>

Indeed, under these rules, there would be a minimal level of strategy between Rias' team and Vali's team. It was more of a direct confrontation. And for the both of them as well as for the audience, everyone hoped to see a direct battle. Anyway, it's almost time for our side to get working. I put in my earpiece and checked that I could communicate with everyone. We would immediately contact each other if we found any suspicious figures. Ravel and I stood together as one group near the entrance of the stadium — our backs were basically facing the main entrance, and we monitored for any suspicious figures. Aside from us, there were also other guard troops patrolling the area…. Of course, we greeted them since it was likely that we would be fighting together this time. —And then, Ravel tugged on my sleeve to show me the direction in which she was pointing. Over on that side, there was a woman who appeared to resemble Akeno-san. She wore a priestess' clothing. She was someone that I knew, so I walked up and spoke to her.

"You're Suzaku-san, right?"

"Yes, it's nice to meet you again. Hyoudou-kun. Akeno and Ouryuu have been in your care."

I responded to Suzaku-san's handshake. She was Akeno-san's cousin. Akeno-san was quite close to her, and she was also the current head of the family who had agreed with Akeno-san's return to the Himejima clan! Like Nakiri, she also belonged to one of the Five Principal Clans, and that was why he often mentioned her. Every time Nakiri spoke of Suzaku-san, he'd say 'Suzaku-san is really scary'.

"Yes, I'm grateful."

I replied, and then Suzaku-san turned her eyes towards the two people who were not far behind her.

"The two of them over there are Kushihashi Seiryuu and Doumon Genbu. Both of them are the current heads of their respective clans."

One of them was a handsome guy who wore glasses, and the other one was a cute-looking loli lady. When the lady's eyes met with us, she seemed to act rather shy, while on the other hand, the handsome guy raised his hand to wave at us. Suzaku-san said

"We originally came to cheer for Akeno, but after asking Tobio, we heard that you're acting as guards. So please also allow us to help you."

Aaaahhh! Suzaku-san is such a nice person! We still haven't confirmed if the Grim Reapers will be coming yet! But, Suzaku-san said to me

"Tobio's intuition has told him that they'll attack. His intuition is always correct. I don't think it's a bad thing for us to stay on alert either."

After Suzaku-san said that, she approached and whispered into my ear

(I hear that you've proposed to Akeno?)

(Y-Yes.)

Indeed, Suzaku-san seemed to care quite deeply for her own cousin. There was a slight hint of sadness in Suzaku-san's eyes.

(…Make her happy, okay? I hope that she'll be happier than anyone else. Because of my predecessor…a lot of cruel things have been done to her.)

I guess it's because I knew about Akeno-san's background that she told me about the past. Suzaku-san is really such a kind person. She's definitely a good head of the family. And she's also a beauty!

"I understand!"

When I answered her frankly, Suzaku-san also smiled with satisfaction. After we exchanged a few more words with each other, we went off to our separate locations. It was just me and Ravel again. I recalled the words that Ikuse-san said to me before we moved into our various positions.

[Is it alright if I leave Ravel in charge of the operation?]

[Yeah, leave it to us. We'll take up your advice in regards to secrecy. But if anything happens, we'll improvise on the spot.]

Ravel nodded in agreement to this.

[Yes, that's fine. That was how I originally intended to do when I thought about it.]

And then we listened to the arrangements that Ravel had made. Ravel stood beside me and determinedly said

“Ise-sama, I…will definitely fight for the sake of protecting Koneko-san and Kuroka-sama’s battle. Of course, I will also fight for the sake of Rias-sama and the others…”

Ravel had always cared for her friend Koneko-chan. She would always accompany her every time they trained, and she had also learned about Koneko-chan’s past due to this incident. As a result, Ravel’s face seemed to express courage.

“I will defend my friend’s important match.”

The current Ravel wasn’t the same as the cool-headed Ravel in the Tournament, right now, she was simply someone driven by her own passions.

“Ravel, fighting in order to protect your friends will make you feel the most nervous, but it’s also an incredibly rewarding thing, you know? This is one battle that I’m fired up for.”

After Ravel listened to my words, she also shivered in excitement.

“Fighting in order to protect my friends…. Yes! I will protect Koneko-san!”

“Yeah, let’s protect them together.”

Just as we were sharing our thoughts with each other, on the screen—.

<<What a surprise! The battle is heating up very quickly!>>

<<Gogmagog-senshu and — Vasco Strada-senshu have rushed forward for a direct confrontation!>>

The game seemed to be filled with excitement! Uwah, I really want to get a good look at His Eminence Strada in battle…! Just as I tried to

calm myself and tell myself to be patient in my mind—. One of my comrades' voices was transmitted to me through my earpiece.

[—Target confirmed. Near the west side of the venue—]

It seems like Ikuse-san's intuition was correct. And so our fight against the Grim Reapers began—.

LIFE.4 VASCO STRADA AND CROM CRUACH [1]

Part 1

I, Kiba Yuuto rushed up to the front line along with His Eminence Vasco Strada as soon as the game began, and our opponents also sent their players out to meet us. Our field this time was a replication of a certain city in the Underworld, and as soon as the game began, both ends of the field would begin to collapse at once. Although it wasn't visible from our current perspective, the size of the field was indeed being reduced, as we had seen this in previously recorded videos. Only half would be left after around thirty minutes, and after another thirty minutes, only a small area would remain. Up until now, the matches that Vali's team had participated in were only subject to the regular rules. They had a very typical and aggressive attack approach centred around Vali where the players who were good at melee combat charged forth. Rias-neesan was also aware of this, so immediately after the rules were determined, she chose me and His Eminence Strada to act as our scout and vanguard respectively. Although Vali and the others didn't seem to have a particular plan of attack, this was in fact the best way for them to make use of the strengths of their team. Their original team composition was top-tier. In particular, Vali's overwhelming offensive power allowed him to defeat even god-class opponents, and he had fought without reservation ever since the beginning of the tournament, thus sending the players of his opposing teams into the light of retirement in just an instant. His creed was not to engage

in long battles with people who couldn't measure up to his own strength, and he would attack them without any mercy whatsoever if he knew that they were no match for him. Aside from god-class beings, there were only a handful of people who were capable of impeding his advance. He had harmony in mind and body, and he was the most powerful Hakuryuukou in history due to his magical talent and demonic energy. All of his team members had also been brought together to maximise his strength, and everyone was also enjoying the fun of the Tournament. Needless to say, if the team's solidarity was high, then it was less likely for anyone to be hindered by their team mates, and thus they could fight at full strength without holding back. His team had been with him through all of the chaos that he engaged in everywhere, and they were truly formidable. Moreover, the rules this time would allow them to go all out. As His Eminence Strada and I ran along the main road which extended towards the centre of the city, an enormous figure suddenly flew towards us. Looking over — Gogmagog swiftly approached us by using the jets on its back and legs! Upon seeing this, a smile was brought to His Eminence Strada's face.

"Well well, I didn't think you'd come to greet us so soon."

His Eminence took out the holy sword with a blue blade from another dimension — Durandal II. It was the newest holy sword that had been created by the alchemists of the Church solely for the purpose of his use. His Eminence prepared to strike the enormous golem that was flying straight towards us. His Eminence said to me

"Isaiah Kiba Yuuto. I can sense some other presences. You pay attention to that side. First off, let me take down this ancient weapon."

After saying so, His Eminence poured energy into his legs and ran forward. The incredible force of his movements left large cracks on the asphalt road. Using just the sheer strength of his legs, His Eminence leapt up high into the air! He swiftly unleashed a slash with his holy sword at the approaching Gogmagog! *Doon*! Accompanied by the sound of an explosion, Gogmagog was blown backwards by a powerful force! He had sent that ancient golem which was 10 metres tall flying backwards with a single blow!

<<Ooh! An intense skirmish is heating up right off the bat!>>

<<It's a head-on collision between Gogmagog-senshu and Vasco Strada-senshu!>>

The live commentary was also broadcast to us. But, just before Gogmagog tumbled over near the city, a strange beam of light flashed from its eyes! However, His Eminence simply used the side of Durandal II's blade to deflect it! After Gogmagog fell, His Eminence landed back on the ground in front of me.

"YOU'RE WIDE OPEEEEN!"

The person who rushed over whilst yelling out like that was — Bikou, who was riding on a cloud! He homed in on His Eminence whilst spinning the Ruyi Bang [2] around in his hand deftly!

"Hoh, an opening huh."

His Eminence Strada immediately reacted and thrust out a single fist! A powerful holy aura coated his fist! —Holy Fist! Bikou did a somersault whilst riding on the cloud and managed to avoid the aura of that fist — but His Eminence had already gotten close to him. The old man who was eighty-seven years of age was incredibly respected by the warriors of the Church, and he completely cut off the option

of retreat. He swung Durandal II at the current Sun Wukong! Bikou lifted his Ruyi Bang to block the hit — but the force of the strike overwhelmed him and Bikou was forcibly pushed down and onto the ground. The destructive power of that strike did not weaken, and having taken that blow, Bikou was slammed against the ground, causing a large crater to form beneath him! *Boom*! After enduring that ferocious blow, Bikou stood back up again, and at the same time, his nose began to bleed! *Bsssshhhhh*! A loud noise echoed across from some distance away, accompanied by an enormous hand! It was Gogmagog's Rocket Punch! That fist flew with such vigorous momentum that it gouged out a trail across the ground underneath it as it flew through the air! His Eminence kicked Bikou away without a single qualm and then firmly clenched his left hand. The muscles in his arm actually swelled up to a preposterous size. And then he threw an unbelievable punch at the Rocket Punch! A loud explosion resounded as the Rocket Punch and His Eminence's fist collided, and the ensuing shockwave blew everything in the vicinity away! The Rocket Punch surrendered to His Eminence's superior strength, and was blown away. He had simply used his bare fist to send the attack of an ancient weapon hurtling backwards! It was extraordinary! It far surpassed the territory of what should have been capable for a human! After His Eminence dealt with Bikou and Gogmagog's attacks, he shook his left hand to alleviate the slight pain that he felt. All I could do was stand there and watch—.

<<……What!>>

<<……What!>>

Both of the live commentators were also lost for words upon seeing His Eminence in battle. This was the first battle that His Eminence Vasco Strada had participated in since the beginning of the

Tournament—. And then, a fiery voice thundered out across the entire field.

<<WHAT AN UNBELIEVABLE START TO THE BATTLE! Vasco Strada-senshu! The Church's Device of Violence! The Vatican's Evil Killer! The Violence of Heaven! A mere human has been able to easily handle the joint attack of the ancient weapon as well as Sun Wukong!>>

Even the grand atmosphere in the stadium could be felt by us in here. Bikou wiped his nosebleed and stood back up again. And at the same time, the space next to him was cut apart, allowing a lone swordsman to emerge — Arthur.

"Oh dear, Bikou. You said you were going to give them a greeting with Gogmagog, did you get hit with the reverse?"

"Shut up! That old man's crazy. My grandfather is so strong that it seems like his very existence is a joke. And this old man almost feels the same."

The two of them argued back and forth with each other. And then — a silvery-white shimmer descended. With his wings of light spread out, the Hakuryuukou stood before us. Vali had already equipped his silvery-white armour [3]. Vali said

"In the past, I used to discuss who the 'strongest human' was. Of those who are on my side, I would vouch for Arthur. —But it seems like I shouldn't draw any rash conclusions."

The God-Devouring Wolf Fenrir appeared beside Vali. Vali, Fenrir, Bikou, Arthur, and Gogmagog had already appeared on the front line. This was their standard offensive formation. Vali continued

“…The possessor of the Holy King Sword, Arthur, the wielder of the Holy Spear — Cao Cao, [Canis Lykaon]’s possessor — Ikuse Tobio, the one known as [First Dark] [4] Kanzaki Mitsuya who controls [Innovate Clear] and [Telos Karma], as well as — the former owner of Durandal, Vasco Strada.”

Vali asked His Eminence

“After being persuaded by Rias Gremory, you must have your own reasons for standing here. …What did the Maou’s little sister give you in return for participating in this battle?”

His Eminence stabbed Durandal into the road and laughed graciously.

“Hahaha, if this was before the alliance of the Three Factions, my actions would be a betrayal of Heaven.”

After saying that, His Eminence removed a small vial from his pocket. There was a sparkling white liquid inside.

“—Allow me to make use of this special technique from the very beginning. After using this, I will return to being a warrior of my heyday.”

It was a concoction that came from the holy water that had been poured out of Valerie’s Holy Grail, and then infused with Gasper’s Balor powers and Koneko-chan’s senjutsu touki. It took three days to make it, and it was a secret blend that only our team was capable of producing. His Eminence used his fingers to pop open the lid, and then he gulped it down in one go. His Eminence crushed the vial in his hand. And then his body began to change. White smoke dispersed from his entire body. After the smoke dissipated, the person standing there was — His Eminence Strada who had returned

to the form that he had in his fifties. The aura that emanated from his body increased even further. His Eminence had used a secret technique to regain his youth, and this was what he looked like in his prime. His Eminence lifted Durandal up and said

"My prime wasn't when I was in my teens or my twenties."

Those words dispelled all of the doubts that everyone had in mind. In order to trial the effects before using it in a game in the Tournament, His Eminence had shown us the results of it during one of our training sessions. At the time, His Eminence had said

[—The so-called spirit or psyche is influenced by physical appearance and physical condition to a great extent. This is the conclusion that I have reached after fighting against so many supernatural beings and special ability users. If I return to the physical body that I had in my teens or twenties, I will return to the state where I was youthful yet immature, and all of the discipline that I've accumulated since then will be lost. Can that truly be called my prime? If I return to that mentally immature time, is there still any meaning in returning to the battlefield?]

His Eminence, whose body had returned to its condition as it was in his fifties said

[If that's the case, I should return to the age at which the balance between my mind and body were honed to their limits. —To me, those days were in my fifties.]

To a Devil who could freely change their outer appearance, perhaps His Eminence's words hit a sore spot. I had heard that a youthful spirit was accompanied by a youthful appearance. That was why a lot of Devils maintained their appearance to be somewhere in

between their prime and their middle age. Of course, there were also Devils who preserved their youthful figures in order to maintain their youthful spirit—. Vali didn't seem to care, and he fearlessly charged straight towards His Eminence! As a result, Fenrir pounced forth in front of him as well! The legendary wolf swiftly swiped down with its large front claws.

"The God-Devouring Wolf huh. With the Hakuryuukou and Holy King Sword on top of that, there isn't a more suitable opponent."

His Eminence evaded Fenrir's high-speed assault with only the slightest of movements! He had completely cleared himself from the trajectory of Fenrir's claws and teeth! Although a portion of Fenrir's strength had been sealed, it was still a legendary monster. It was impossible to defeat it without a considerably trained mind and body. However…His Eminence borrowed his accumulated experience to easily dodge the attack, and then counterattacked with his fist to land a direct blow on the legendary monster's face! Fenrir was actually sent crashing backwards!

"Hey, am I seeing an illusion? That old man just toyed with Fenrir!"

Upon seeing this, even Bikou's eyes widened in surprise.

"Hmph, now this is interesting!"

Vali released an incredibly powerful silvery-white aura from his hands! Any ordinary human would be defenceless against this power. —But, His Eminence didn't show any intentions of evading, and he simply held the holy sword up in front of his chest.

"It certainly is tremendous demonic energy. You could even say that it's on the highest class that I've ever seen amongst Devils. —But."

With a single strike, the silvery-white aura that Vali released was directly slashed apart by Durandal II! The aura had been cut apart, and His Eminence no longer stood there in that spot. Vali used his sight and senses to search for His Eminence's presence—. His Eminence appeared right behind Vali, and swung down the holy sword! Vali immediately responded by swinging his fist that was covered in demonic energy across — but what he hit was just an afterimage! His Eminence roared

"—Take a good look at the skill and strength that a human has attained through only training!"

Zan! —It was the sound of a blade! Vali was unable to dodge, and he took a direct hit!

"Damn it! Ruyi Bang!"

Realising that his leader had been hit, Bikou rushed forward and swung his Ruyi Bang! His Eminence managed to evade the attack with ease, causing Bikou's expression to turn bitter. Bikou pulled out a few of his monkey hairs, and then blew on them with his breath! The strands of hair which were blown out gradually enlarged and changed shape! There were actually his clones, and there were now a countless number of them! This was the cloning technique that Sun Wukong commonly used with his hair.

"Come one! Let's go!"

Bikou and his countless clones all dashed forward with a Ruyi Bang in their hands!

"—That is a technique that belongs to your ancestor. But it hasn't yet reached the level of Sun Wukong."

His Eminence said that as he wielded the holy sword and destroyed the clones one after the other. It didn't seem like he was struggling or getting hit at all. And even if he was hit, His Eminence would surely be fine.

"Then, how about this!"

The army of clones split into two squads. One group extended the length of their Ruyi Bangs, while the other caused them to thicken. The elongated and thickened Ruyi Bangs attacked all at the same time!

"—It's still just half-baked."

While saying so, His Eminence used Durandal to unleash a colossal holy wave which completely slashed every member of the clone army in half—. With just one attack! His Eminence immediately shortened the distance between him and Bikou so that he could throw a direct punch at Bikou's face! Bikou was punched and blown away to a distant location! Bikou crashed into a car that was parked by the curb and slumped over onto the ground.

"Kuh! …I-Is this a joke, just how strong is this old man…!?"

Bikou spat another fresh mouthful of blood out of his mouth as he stood up. Vali began to move again. He didn't seem to have been severely injured, and although his armour had taken damage, he could still fire off blasts of demonic energy from close range! His Eminence evaded all of the blasts with minimal movement. All of the shots that he evaded caused mass destruction to the buildings that were off in the distance behind him! Vali's speed accelerated to the point that his figure vanished. He circled around His Eminence at

nearly god-speed, but His Eminence didn't seem intimidated by this at all, and he simply revealed a courageous smile.

"I've got you."

Vali tried to attack from behind — but His Eminence had already realised. Once again, all that was left in his original position was an afterimage, and on the contrary, His Eminence appeared right behind Vali!

"Those who think that they can sneak up behind me are always prone to openings."

—But, Vali immediately jumped away from that spot to evade the counterattack.

"As expected of the Hakuryuukou. You reacted immediately. —But you're still too naïve."

His Eminence enveloped Durandal in a tremendous amount of aura! The sheer amount was enough to make one shiver in fear! His Eminence slashed Durandal down towards Vali who was a fair distance away! The vast holy aura caused the road, parked cars, buildings, and everything in that singular direction to be annihilated as the wave approached Vali at high speed! Vali was able to dodge the wave of aura, but It continued to fly far into the distance, and everything left in its wake was eliminated! It eventually reached the end of the field and crashed into the barrier, causing an enormous tremor to rock the entire field. His Eminence said

"My Durandal can cut a target that's even several kilometres away."

…In other words, to His Eminence, this entire field was within his range of attack. Gogmagog, which had reconstructed its body and had begun flying back towards this location was once again blown away to a distant location by the holy wave that His Eminence had unleashed! His Eminence immediately charged towards Vali and attacked him. *Don*! —A blunt noise echoed. His Eminence's fist had smashed through Vali's armour and landed a direct hit on Vali's abdomen!

"—!?!?"

With an astonished expression, Vali immediately retreated backwards after taking that blow, but His Eminence quickly sent out another wave of holy aura in pursuit. Vali crossed his arms in front of his body as a defensive measure—. Accompanied by the sound of a massive explosion, Vali's gauntlets — not only that, the armour covering his entire body was shattered by that single blow. His Eminence Strada said

"That silvery-white armour is of no consequence to me right now."

"…So I might have to use that form that can defeat a god-class being huh. Seriously, are you really a human? I can't blame Arthur for respecting you as much as he does. It's no surprise that there are so many people who respect you."

Vali voiced his words of praise for His Eminence.

"Now, the supernatural races will have a video recording of this. In the past, the Devils who stood above high-class Devils and all of the abnormal existences would only have appeared in rumours or legends. It was the first time that they had been seen, and no one knew how to respond. But if a recording of a battle is left behind,

regardless of whether they're a Heavenly Dragon or something else, there will now be evidence. All that's left is to feel that aura on an actual battlefield."

…Am I also seeing an illusion? After all, regardless of which faction they're compared to, the strength of Vali's team is undoubtable, but even after having the leader Vali, Bikou, Fenrir and Gogmagog as opponents, not only was he uninjured, he had repelled every single one of them. His strength could no longer be described by mere words alone, he was an embodiment of power—. The limits of humanity — Vasco Strada. …Is it truly possible for a human to be this strong!? Just as a serious expression emerged in Vali's eyes, someone stood in front of him. —It was Arthur.

"Please leave this to me and Bikou. Vali, you take Fenrir and find someone else to be your opponent. Look, Rias Gremory and that Evil Dragon are waiting for you. —Collbrande and I have finally found an opponent with true skill that we could fight seriously against, so let me step into the limelight for a bit."

Bikou also urged Vali to go by saying

"Hurry up and go."

Vali accepted their gesture of goodwill and prepared to leave with Fenrir. I wanted to block the way, but Bikou stood in front of me.

"Well, why don't you spar with me for a bit, handsome-kun?"

"…Alright. I'll guess I'll enjoy this together with His Eminence."

As Bikou and I confronted each other, Arthur slowly walked towards His Eminence, and in response, His Eminence also stepped forward. The two of them were almost face to face when they

revealed their grins of delight. It almost looked like the scene of two lovers reuniting with each other after being separated for many years—.

“It was quite a pity the other day.”

“Yes, indeed. But, here you are standing in front of me again.”

His Eminence gripped the hilt of Durandal tightly as the smile carved onto his face grew even deeper.

“—Knowing that an existence like you exists, I don’t think I’ll be able to enjoy my final days if I don’t fight against you at my best as a fellow swordsman. —Please be sure to make this a special memory for me before I depart for the afterlife.”

“By all means.”

Like this, the battle between me and Bikou, and the battle between His Eminence Strada and Arthur began—.

Part 2

On the other hand, on the east side of the field, Himejima Akeno wore a shrine maiden’s outfit, and Lint Sellzen wore a battle suit for the Tournament as they faced off against the current Zhu Bajie, Sha Wujing and Le Fay Pendragon. The eastern side of the field was a spacious park. Near an artificial waterfall, Akeno confronted Zhu Bajie, while Lint confronted Sha Wujing head on. And at a point that was some distance away from them, Le Fay Pendragon had deployed a magic circle. Akeno understood that the opponent’s formation consisted of two vanguards and one rear support. Her own opponent was the current Zhu Bajie, a humanoid Youkai with the head and

features of a pig whose appearance was basically identical to how he had been described in the tales. His weapon had nine sharp teeth and resembled a bear's claw — he held an iron-toothed rake in his hands.

"Onee-san, I'm just a little piggy, so please go easy on me."

…I heard that the current Zhu Bajie was an interesting person…Akeno recalled. Akeno had already spread open her Fallen Angel wings, and created thunder clouds above them in the sky. She then threw bolts of lightning down towards Zhu Bajie! Although Zhu Bajie's body was rather chubby, he dodged the lightning strikes with a few small steps and then instantly shortened their distance. He seemed to understand that Akeno was not good a melee battles. However, Akeno immediately created defensive magic circles, nullifying all of Zhu Bajie's attacks. Zhu Bajie then took a deep breath, and his chest swelled — he breathed out flames from his mouth! The scale of his attack was incredibly vast! If Akeno had been caught by it, she likely would've suffered considerable damage! Akeno immediately flew away and prepared to counterattack in mid-air, however, Zhu Bajie continued to spit out great blasts of fire and simply looked up to change the angle of his attack.

"Holy Lightning!"

Akeno once again summoned forth lightning to counter the blast of Zhu Bajie's flames, and then followed up with several additional bolts of lightning. Zhu Bajie evaded all of them one by one, but he was eventually caught in the line of fire of one of them. The lightning strike gave Zhu Bajie a powerful electric shock, inflicting burns upon him. The entire area surrounding him had also been charred black due to the aftermath of the lightning strikes. Light was also a weakness of the Youkai, so that last blow should have been quite

close to an instantaneous knockout. That was what Akeno's intuition told her—. But as the smoke settled, Zhu Bajie was still there. Although he had been struck, he was still capable of movement. After a brief silence, Zhu Bajie muttered

"……Yes."

With an ectstatic, trance-like expression, those words leaked from his mouth. Akeno found the situation somewhat unfathomable, and she thought to herself '*this can't be*'. Following this, they continued their fierce offensive and defensive battle, and after being struck by Akeno's attacks several more times, Zhu Bajie finally screamed out

"Yeeeeeeeeessssssssssss! Good, it's reeeaaaallllllyyy goooooood!"

He cried out with both pleasure and pain—. Akeno recalled a certain piece of information. The man whom she loved and the one to whom she was engaged to — Hyoudou Issei had once told her this.

[Come to think of it, the Vali team's Zhu Bajie has a really negative personality and he's also an M.]

Certainly, my husband did say such a thing, Akeno reminded herself. She thought that he was half-joking about it, but after being struck once again by Akeno's lightning, Zhu Bajie screamed out with bliss.

"Aaaaaaahh! P-Please show mercy to this masochist pig! Queen-samaaaa!"

Akeno had indeed inflicted damage upon him, but after every attack, her opponent's enthusiasm only rose to an even higher level, and his physical abilities were also improving. In other words, the

more he was struck by Akeno's attacks, the more energised he became. Akeno herself had a fondness for S&M, but in the face of Zhu Bajie, she couldn't help but feel confused. His high physical ability also left her at a loss for words. He had clearly been struck by several bolts of lightning, yet he was still full of energy, and it seemed that in terms of stamina and endurance, he was rather outstanding even among those in Vali's team. Akeno sighed.

"I won't hold back. After all, you're a member of the Hakuryuukou's team, and you're also the current Zhu Bajie."

Left with no other choice, Akeno shaped her lightning into the form of a dragon, and she began to attack with her Holy Lightning Dragon. —At that time, the magician Le Fay dashed across whilst stepping over magic circles that were created beneath her feet. She stood beside Zhu Bajie, and pointed her staff at Akeno.

"Then, allow me to be your opponent as well!"

"Ara ara, Le Fay-chan. —I'm not going to go easy on you, you know?"

Le Fay responded to Akeno with a smile.

"Of course!"

Akeno was now faced with both Zhu Bajie and Le Fay. Standing not far away from them was Lint, who held a sword of purple flames in her right hand and a specially-made pistol by the Church in her left hand. Facing her was a girl with vermillion-coloured hair who held a long staff that had a half-moon blade attached to it — the current Sha Wujing. As an opponent, Sha Wujing was currently still supposed to be in middle school. She was good at manipulating water, and there was a large body of water at the location of their fight. By

manipulating the water that flowed down from the waterfall, she was able to fire off spherical bullets of water towards Lint. Lint used her pistol to fire off bullets of purple flames, vaporising every single one of the water blasts.

"Pew! Pew!"

Lint uttered as she resisted Sha Wujing's barrage of water techniques. The pistol in Lint's hand was a specially made product that aligned with the power of her Sacred Gear. Lint's movements were also incredibly fast. They could even be compared to Kiba Yuuto. However, she didn't have the refined technique that Kiba Yuuto had, and her movements seemed somewhat more rigid in comparison. But she compensated for that with the wild and unpredictable nature of her movements. She gracefully flexed her body like a gymnast to evade her opponent's attacks whilst attacking with her sword and firing off bullets from all sorts of unexpected positions. Lint launched her attacks from an array of unusual positions, making it difficult for her opponent to predict them…but Sha Wujing was able to dodge them quite well with her petite figure. This was to be expected of a member of Vali's team.

"Youkai missy, you're pretty good."

"I-It's Sha Wujing! Pleased to make your acquaintance!"

They began to converse with each other as they fought. And then Lint said

"Ah, I do seem to recall now that the Kappa Youkai are pretty famous in Japan, aren't they?"

"—!?"

Upon hearing that word, Sha Wujing halted her attacks and her entire body trembled.

"…Ka."

"Ka?"

Lint tilted her head as she asked, while Sha Wujing's cheeks swelled and she began to tear up in anger.

"I'm not a Kappa! The original Sha Wujing was a Youkai hermit who lived in a river!"

A vast volume of water floated up into the air! Although she had gotten caught up in her anger, she was still capable of controlling such a large volume of water…it was obvious that she had excellent innate potential.

"Oops, did I just say a taboo word?"

Lint undauntedly said.

"Well then, it's time for me to get a bit serious."

Lint's body — gave off a dazzling glow. And then, six Angel wings appeared on her back. A bright halo also appeared above her head. Indeed, Lint — was a reincarnated Angel. Her wings weren't pure white, but instead a dazzling silver—. The purple flames emitted by Lint's body grew even more intense.

"Now, let's have a good contest between fire and water."

Sha Wujing cried out with a competitive spirit to Lint as she manipulated the water.

"I won't lose!"

They once again resumed their fight—. And like this, the battle on the east side of the field gradually began to intensify as well!

Part 3

The location changed again, and this time it was the southwestern part of the game field. Wearing her uniform for the Tournament, Rias Gremory completed her preparations for battle and she began flying towards Vali Lucifer. On the southwestern side of the field were many high-rise building complexes. Rias was accompanied by Gasper, Valerie and Crom Cruach, and she gradually began to move further north. Rias stood on the rooftop of a skyscraper which was still under construction. There were several exposed steel beams and stagnant cranes in the vicinity. Rias stood on top of the building and directed her eyes towards the direction that Vali was approaching from. He was about to arrive soon, so there was no need to hide. Since the field was an urban area, there were a countless number of small shops where one could hide within the downtown area. But their opponent was capable of various ultra-wide-range attacks, so doing so was useless. Since their opponent Vali was someone who could overturn the entire scene with his powerful techniques, a strategy which made use of the environment was meaningless. Since that was the case, there was no need to hide. They simply waited out in the open for him to arrive right from the outset. Gasper stood by her side, and on an upper floor of the neighbouring building, Valerie remained in one of the rooms. As a rear guard, Crom Cruach stood on top of a crane and closed his eyes as he waited for the arrival of that moment. There was only one opponent whom he was looking forward to. Rias asked Gasper who was beside her

“Gasper, how’s the situation?”

Gasper had released his bats throughout the field and had been observing the battles that were occurring in various places. Gasper's eyes glowed red as he said

"Yes, Koneko-san seems to have been able to meet her sister Kuroka on the west side. They both use senjutsu, so they've been able to determine each other's positions."

One of the things that Rias was concerned about in this game was the fight between Koneko and Kuroka. It seemed as though Vali also took note of this, and so he allowed Kuroka to head into a one-on-one battle. Vali always prepared only the bare minimum in terms of tactics and strategy. It wasn't that he didn't think about strategy, rather, he didn't restrict his team members so as to allow them to demonstrate their full potential. Of course, the team members would also cooperate with each other when it was necessary to do so. That was why the Vali team had a tendency to value the respective thoughts and feelings of each member. As the leader, Vali always made it a priority to fight against the people that he wanted to fight against, and this idea also spread to his comrades. This time, Koneko's battle held an important place in her heart, and it also carried a significant meaning for her future growth. Her past self who felt fearful of Kuroka at the time was something that she had to overcome on her own.

"…I see, if that's the case, then one of the key points of this game has been resolved. All that remains is—"

Rias gazed into the distance, and soon afterwards, a silvery-white figure approaching at high-speed appeared in her view—. Vali Lucifer arrived in front of Rias.

"I'll be fighting against you, Vali."

“Hmph, so the Evil Dragon will protect the [King].”

Vali’s eyes were drawn to Crom who stood on top of a crane. As soon as Crom noticed Vali’s presence, he enveloped his body in a dense aura. Rias looked proudly at Crom and said

“Only in this Tournament will you be allowed to take Ise’s place. Very well, Crom. —I promised. Let loose and be Vali’s opponent. Is there anything you’re unsatisfied with?”

Crom spread his dragon wings and flew down. Crom stared at Vali and revealed a smile of acceptance.

“Fufufu, no, this is fine. I’m absolutely satisfied. I only participated in this rowdy Tournament because I wanted a fight like this.”

Vali responded to Crom by enveloping his entire body in aura as well. The space between the two of them began to distort as a result of the pressure exerted by each side. It was no longer possible to stop the two of them. The two of them had finally found an opponent to go all out against in this place. The duel of the dragons had already begun—.

“Do you need a promotion?”

Rias asked Crom before they began.

“No, I’ll fight just as I am.”

Under these rules, because the field would begin to collapse from both ends, it was not necessary to cross over to the opponent’s side to be promoted. A [Pawn] could be promoted simply with the approval of the [King]. Hence, a normal tactic would involve allowing a [Pawn] to use Promotion from the very beginning so that they could quickly engage in short and decisive battles. The [Pawn] on the

other side, Bikou, had already been promoted. However, Crom rejected the promotion. It was certainly fitting of his style. Leaving Vali to Crom, Rias looked at the thing that was standing on the rooftop of a nearby building. The God-Devouring Wolf was staring at them. It looked like she was the target of that monster. Last year—. They had once cooperated with Vali's team and expended a great amount of effort to use seals to suppress that legendary monster. Regardless of whether it was the former Dragon King Tannin, Issei, or Vali, none of them were able to defeat that wolf. Even though its power had been sealed, it would inevitably be a struggle to fight against it—. No, it would be impossible to win. But, Rias wasn't planning to fight against it alone. Rias said to Gasper who was on standby beside her

"…Gasper, our opponent is Fenrir. —Is that okay?"

"Yes."

The Vampire boy who originally seemed so timid — had become strong with the help of his comrades. Both in body and spirit—. A black aura shrouded Gasper's body, and his body began to change. He transformed into an enormous creature with the power of Balor that seemed to resemble a dragon.

<<No matter who my opponent is, I'll defeat them for you. — Whether they're a Heavenly Dragon, or even a God.>>

"That's what it means to be a man of the Gremory household!"

Gasper rushed forward from his original position towards Fenrir, and Rias followed behind him! And on the other side — in the sky above the high-rise buildings, the battle between Vali and Crom

began. Crom's body exuded a tremendous aura that was intertwined with the colours of gold and black, and he said to Vali

"Words are unnecessary. —Allow me to witness your true power, Heavenly Dragon. Hakuryuukou. Vali Lucifer!"

Crom made the first move! Without any hesitation, Crom charged straight towards Vali with the shortest path possible! Crom transformed his right arm into that of a dragon's large claw, and whilst coated in an unbelievably dense aura, he thrust it directly at Vali! Vali didn't make any excessive evasive manoeuvers, and simply evaded with the smallest possible margin. The aura that Vali had dodged caused a large hole to be drilled through the skyscraper that was behind Vali. One by one, a countless number of buildings were damaged as a result of this domino effect! With just one punch, Crom had been able to cause such destruction with his power, and he engaged in a fierce melee battle with Vali in mid-air! Crom exchanged blows with Vali at high speed; punches, knee strikes, elbow strikes, and even head butts were all thrown at his opponent! It was a battle of such extraordinary speed that the naked eye could barely keep up! Those punches and kicks — even an ultimate-class Devil, no, perhaps even a Maou-class being would not be able to endure direct hits from all of these blows. Every single blow generated immense vibrations and booms in the air, causing the entire atmosphere to tremble! As an aftermath of all of the aura that was evaded, everything that could be seen on the ground was devastated by it! Vali didn't attack, and instead simply focused on evasion. It wasn't that he couldn't fight back, rather, he was deliberately focusing on evading Crom's attacks. Crom watched as Vali continually dodged all of his attacks and laughed

"So is it really that fun just to dodge all of my attacks!?"

Vali replied

“These are the attacks of the so-called strongest Evil Dragon. As an appetiser, I wanted to see all of them first.”

Crom temporarily pulled back. The adrenalin rush had caused his entire body to tremble.

“To think that an Evil Dragon who only knows how to fight and spread death like me can fight against a beautiful silvery-white dragon like you…. It’s truly something to be proud of. As an Evil Dragon, I have no regrets!”

The onslaught resumed once more. This time it was Vali’s turn to act; the specialty of Vali’s attacks were bombardments of demonic energy. He unleashed a relentless barrage consisting of enormous amounts of demonic energy. His bombardments were just like Crom’s attacks in that any ordinary person would surely be reduced to nothing if they were hit by it. However, Crom simply used his fist to repel Vali’s attacks! The blasts of demonic energy were countered by his fists, causing their trajectory to be deflected towards the surrounding buildings which crumbled along with the sound of great explosions. Crom’s chest swelled! In the next instant, he spewed forth flames which covered the entire sky! The intensity of the heat was so extreme that even Rias could feel it from afar! Vali extended his hand out and then injected energy into it!

[Compression Divider!!!!]

That was one of his ultimate techniques that he had once used to compress the ultimate-class Grim Reaper Pluto into extinction. By using this, he would be able to destroy all of Crom’s flames. Under the compressive power of the Hakuryuukou, the flames were

continuously compressed and gradually became smaller — or so that should've been the case originally! *Baaah*—! A loud noise erupted in the air, and the flames returned to their original size! Let alone Vali, even Rias was exceedingly surprised by this! —Crom's flames had exceeded Vali's ultimate technique! The immense flames that couldn't be compressed completely surrounded Vali! Crom didn't give Vali any time to rest, and he dived straight into the flames — he continued a melee assault against Vali amidst the inferno of searing flames! Being assaulted by an innumerable number of punches and kicks within the conflagration, even Vali was unable to endure for long.

"Haah!"

Vali's entire body radiated a silvery-white aura, and he blew Crom's flames away! But Crom didn't hesitate and he continued his melee assault. Vali's silvery-white armour had begun to melt due to the high temperatures it was exposed to, and it also began to crack as a result of the fierce blitz of physical blows. Vali was well aware that Crom would only attack him directly in a frontal assault, so Vali unleashed a blast of demonic energy at Crom from an ultra-close range and then used that opportunity to pull back and increase their distance from each other. —However, just as Vali was about to retreat, Crom firmly gripped onto his arm! Crom didn't even seem to care that he had taken a direct hit from that demonic energy, but he absolutely wouldn't allow Vali to flee from his side. With his helmet now shattered, Vali's expression displayed astonishment at the fact that Crom wouldn't back down even when he received a direct hit. On the contrary, when Crom saw Vali like this, he revealed an ecstatic smile. Whilst holding onto Vali's arm, Crom transformed his other arm into that of a large dragon's claw and thrust it straight across! Without any means of escape, Vali was forced to endure the

attack, and he was propelled backwards into one of the skyscrapers in the distance! Upon seeing the various holes that had been created in the buildings as a result of Vali being driven backwards, Rias couldn't help but gasp.

—The strongest Hakuryuukou is being completely overwhelmed in a physical battle!?

However, it was impossible for Vali to be defeated just like that. Vali immediately flew out of a collapsed building and came back to stand before Crom's eyes. But, his figure — was already completely worn out. It was also the first time that the audience had seen Vali gasping for air like this.

<<…Strong! How outrageously strong, Mr. Black! No, Crom Cruach-senshu! The legendary Evil Dragon has actually forced the so-called Strongest Hakuryuukou in History into such a state! Moreover, he's done so simply with physical attacks, aura attacks, and a dragon's flames; all of which are a dragon's standard abilities!>>

Just as the announcer had declared in a loud voice, Crom preferred the standard attack methods of a dragon. Using physical attacks, releasing aura, and spitting out flames. These were the only things that Crom pursued. And the result of this was Vali's current pitiful state. As a Heavenly Dragon, one who was known as the Strongest Hakuryuukou in History, and as a descendant of the Maou Lucifer, he had been overwhelmed. Vali painfully realised that it was impossible for his silvery-white armour to win against Crom. Indeed, he found himself helpless against Crom. —The Evil Dragon Crom Cruach wasn't a dragon who could be defeated by even any ordinary god-class being. Although a stream of blood flowed down Vali's forehead, he still showed a courageous smile. This was the evidence that he felt

truly happy from the bottom of his heart. Vali also exposed an ecstatic smile. Whilst trembling with excitement, Vali said

“I understand now, that both you and Aži Dahāka are equally noble dragons. I feel honoured to be given the opportunity to fight against you.”

After Vali repaired his armour, a quiet aura began to drift about. And then, he began to chant the words of power!

“The pure White Dragon dwelling within me, rise up from your supremacy—”

His silvery-white armour was gradually tainted by jet-black patterns.

[The silvery-white Morning Star I possess within me, claim the throne of Dawn—]

“The jet-black God of Infinity”

[—The mysterious and unfathomable father of Devils]

Twelve black wings grew from Vali’s back, the edges of his armour sharpened, and it transmuted into a form that seemed to resemble a living organism. The voices of Vali and Albion overlapped

“[—We shall transcend the limits to accept the oath]”

The magic circle that symbolized Lucifer appeared on all of the jewels of his armour, and his body released a dazzling glow!

“[[—Thou shalt kneel down before our bright and glorious existence!]]”

[[[LLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLucifer!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!]]]

The loud voice that echoed out from all of the gems seemed like a malfunction. And then, a powerful and majestic voice rang out!

[[Dragon Lucifer Drive!!!!!!!!]]

What appeared in that place was a brilliant new Hakuryuukou with twelve black wings of Lucifer, and armour that was dyed in silvery-white and jet-black tones—. The shape of the armour seemed to beautifully resemble an organic form. …Rias once again realised how difficult it was to get close. The quality of his aura could instil fear in others—. One could even say that his aura could match that of a Super Devil. The quality and quantity of his aura had soared immensely from his silvery-white form. Glowing with the brilliance of Lucifer's aura, Vali disappeared from that spot with godlike speed. The abnormal speed was beyond perception, and it was probably difficult to keep track of his presence as well. However, Crom didn't waver as he thrust his fist out as if it were only natural. *Don*! A blunt sound emanated from his fist as Vali was hit! Unexpectedly, Crom didn't use his eyes to keep track of Vali, and he didn't seem to have detected Vali's presence either. After a moment of hesitation, Vali immediately recomposed himself, and moved at a godlike speed once again. This time, he unleashed the aura of Lucifer at a velocity that couldn't be perceived with the naked eye! Crom took a direct hit from the aura of Lucifer and was forced to stop. An explosion occurred at his body, and his blood sprayed out in every direction, but even so, he was still able to move his fists to aim for Vali! *Don*! — Crom's punch hit Vali who had descended from above, shattering the armour at his abdomen!

"Guha!"

Underneath his helmet, Vali spat out a mouthful of blood. Vali immediately prepared to lengthen their distance, but Crom didn't hesitate to shorten the distance between them so that he could punch him again! Whilst Crom swung his fists at Vali, he said

"You're truly fast. Even the quality of your aura has changed. Even I'll be in danger if I keep taking direct hits."

Vali gathered aura into his hands to guard against the blows, and then asked in return

"…You can attack me. So doesn't that mean you can see me?"

"No, I can't see. I can't even block or evade your aura."

"Then, how are you able to hit me?"

Crom replied as if it were only natural

"Intuition."

—What! It was an unbelievable answer, but coming from this dragon's mouth, it felt too real, and so Vali had no choice but to accept it. He — Crom combined the intuition that he had cultivated through countless battles and his natural instinct to predict the trajectory of Vali's attacks. As expected of a dragon who only knew how to fight. He was an embodiment of this concept. A dragon who specialised only in battle—. This was the Ultimate Evil Dragon, Crom Cruach—. He had even broken portions of the armour which had undergone Maouificaiton. Vali asked his partner as he pulled away from his opponent.

"Albion, measure this with your eyes. How would you judge the difference between me and that guy?"

[In terms of skill, technique and speed, you have the upper hand, Vali. But, he has the advantage in offense and defence. Simply speaking in terms of destructive power, Crom Cruach is above you.]

"I see, that guy's attacks surpass even Hyoudou Issei's attacks when he underwent Dragon Deification."

[That's right, this Evil Dragon…has already completely surpassed both me and Ddraig when we were alive.]

"With only physical attacks, aura and a dragon's flames huh. With just these three, he can fight against me?"

[Yeah, physical attacks, aura and a dragon's breath are all ordinary methods that dragons use to attack, and with just these three things, he can overwhelm you.]

"…Haha! This is quite the unbearable situation…haha!"

Whilst overflowing with fighting spirit, Vali laughed out wildly. Vali then understood something very clearly. Today, an opponent who could defeat him had appeared before his eyes. The absolute victories that visited him so casually in the previous games would not do so today. Crom once again inflated his chest and spewed forth a great wave of flames. The intensity of the heat was even fiercer than it had been before! Vali spread his twelve wings and flew out! Even a slight movement of his wings caused all of the surrounding buildings to crumble. He then extended his arms out and gathered aura into them.

[[[LLLL

[[[Satan Compression Divider!!!!!!!!!!!!]]]

The absolute aura which was intertwined with relentlessly brilliant silver and jet-black light instantly caused the flames that Crom spat out to compress, compress even further, and compress even more, until everything around it disappeared. Even though he had been unable to compress it with his silvery-white armour, he was able to do so now that he had undergone Maouificaiton. Simultaneously, Vali released the same wyverns that Issei possessed from his twelve black wings towards Crom! Crom used his fists to smash them down mercilessly, but one of them used an ability.

[Half Dimension!!]

The small wyverns used the ability that allowed Vali to compress space itself. Even against Crom, it would restrict his movements momentarily—. But Crom still continued to edge closer to Vali without any restraint. Even more wyverns began flying towards Crom.

[Half Dimension!!]

[Half Dimension!!]

[Half Dimension!!]

The fabric of space was compressed over and over again. At last, Crom's body buckled under the pressure and his movements were slowed…but Crom grit his teeth and continued to advance forward! The wyverns flew towards Crom as he tried to advance and they continually used their ability on him, causing the teeth that the Evil Dragon clenched down on to begin bleeding — but he still continued to swing his fists and destroy the wyverns one after the other! What

incredible determination! What incredible power! Vali even cried out in surprise

"You can still move!?"

Vali continuously bombarded him with his absolute aura, but Crom continued to fly straight towards him without any intention of dodging! The aura of Lucifer crashed into Crom, and a massive explosion went off in the air. As he emerged from the smoke, Crom thrust his fist out at Vali! Whilst pursuing him, he let loose a mouthful of flames as well! Up until now, Crom had relied only on his physical prowess and his innate abilities as a dragon. His fist smashed Vali's helmet and singed the six wings on his right side. With clear resolution, Vali unleashed a blast of demonic energy directly at Crom's abdomen! After a violent explosion occurred, Vali flew back and augmented their distance. As the explosion cleared, he saw Crom's body covered and dripping in blood! —But, his fighting spirit hadn't decreased at all. In fact, he had become even more motivated. Upon seeing that his aura hadn't faded at all, all Vali could do was laugh

"Evil Dragon Crom Cruach, I give my thanks to the Dragon God that I'm able to fight against you. —I am the Hakuryuukou of the Morning Star, Vali Lucifer. No matter how this game ends, I swear. I swear that I will continue to fight against you until the very end."

It was a dragon's declaration of war. Crom also announced his own name.

"I am the Crescent Circle Dragon Crom Cruach. I accept the oath of the Hakuryuukou of the Morning Star, Vali Lucifer. —A dragon's duel does not need a reason. All it needs is pride, fists, and the will to fight. That is all. That is why I fight."

Indeed, no reason was necessary for a fight between men [5]. As a woman, Rias found this difficult to understand, and whenever a powerful man met another powerful man, they always fought in this manner. —A warrior would be delighted by an even stronger warrior. Whilst Vali and Crom's battle continued to rage on, on another side, Rias and Gasper's battle against Fenrir continued. Rias released her demonic power of destruction while Gasper controlled his dark beasts. Fenrir moved between the high-rise buildings with quick reflexes, using the strength of its legs to push against the walls to jump off. It then leapt off the next wall that it landed on to evade the attacks of those two. The attacks of Rias and Gasper missed, destroying various skyscrapers one after the other. Fenrir suddenly charged towards Gasper with a speed that rivalled lightning and tore Gasper's right arm off. Gasper immediately regenerated his arm, but Fenrir's swift movements knocked him to the ground. Moreover, Fenrir's claws and sharp teeth had a special characteristic that allowed it to devour gods. It was impossible to avoid a life-threatening injury upon being hit. As Fenrir charged towards Rias, Gasper directed his dark beasts to act as a shield. Although he had managed to block the attack, even a single injury was fatal. Fenrir paused, and then jumped up onto the roof of a particular building and began to howl.

Aooooooooooohh….

Its long howl echoed between the walls of the buildings. In an instant, the God-Devouring Wolf was enveloped in a grey aura, and its appearance also began to change—. After its aura dissipated, what appeared before Rias and the others was a giant ten-meter long wolf. Fenrir had actually liberated its power! Up until now, they had never seen this form in any of the matches! Could Vali and the others have returned it back to its original form…? Fenrir's change

into this form was a signal that it would continue to fight. It had been completely liberated from Loki's curse, yet it still remained under the control of Vali and the others. No, this was Fenrir's own will. It treated Vali and the others as its comrades and chose to fight for them. It was bad for them to face Fenrir in this form. Vali had put this wolf into the position of [Queen], which meant that the wolf was capable of a matching level of strength. This was the legendary monster that even Vali at the time couldn't match up to—. Its sharp fangs and claws could destroy even a god. Vali had added it into his team for the purpose of defeating gods. But, this wolf wasn't the only one that could wield such destruction. Rias said to Gasper

"—Gasper, we'll have to use that one."

<<Understood.>>

Gasper stood beside Rias. Rias and Gasper then chanted the words of power together.

"Darkness, everlasting darkness, respond to this Devil of destruction"

<<Princess of destruction, symbol of extinction, use this darkness of the Demon God>>

Gasper melted into his shadow, and that shadow fused with the one that was at Rias' feet. The shadow writhed, and starting from Rias' legs, it gradually covered her entire body.

"My evil eye, brother of the evil eyes, gather onto this destruction of mine"

<<My master, sister of destruction, drape this forbidden night and true darkness around you>>

Rias' body was covered in darkness, culminating in a new form. What appeared there was a dark beast in the shape of a human—. And then, Rias and Gasper, the older sister of destruction and the younger brother of darkness chanted the last verse at the same time

"<<Give the enemy before you absolute destruction!>>"

Everything was swallowed by darkness. The landscape was dyed jet-black. Floating in the centre of this darkness was a human-shaped Devil of darkness who was enveloped in the deep red aura of destruction—. Having transformed into a dark beast, Rias said

[The inspiration came from Sairaorg. Just like how the lion of his peerage — the Longinus was worn as armour. This idea was supplemented with Ise's combination technique, in which he turned his wyverns into armour for me. Combining these two elements, I've finally completed this form.]

Having turned into a dark beast, a third eye with a deep red pupil opened on Rias' forehead.

[—It's called Forbidden Invade Balor the Princess [6].]

Rias understood that so long as she continued to obtain victories in this Tournament, she would eventually have to fight against the Two Heavenly Dragons or god-class beings someday. Since that was the case, it was necessary for her to obtain the power to oppose them.

—I don't want to become a high-class Devil who is only good at negotiations.

She wanted to use all of the cards in her hand to fight until the very end! This was the answer that Rias had arrived at for this Tournament. Having returned to its original form, Fenrir crouched down and prepared to pounce. The God-Devouring Wolf was now on

full alert. It instinctively understood how dangerous this form of Rias and Gasper's was. Fenrir leapt across at high speed! Rias — the eye on her forehead glowed, and with that, Fenrir's movements were frozen! However, Fenrir immediately released its aura to free itself so that it could once again advance, but Rias submerged into the shadow beneath her feet. Rias then reappeared in the shadow of the high-rise building upon which Fenrir had landed. Rias unleashed her power of destruction — with an unprecedented scale. Moreover, she had also fused in the power of darkness into her demonic energy, causing the entire building to be destroyed as the demonic energy continued to dart straight towards Fenrir. Fenrir had already leapt away before the building was eliminated, but it was stopped in the very instant that it leapt out by her time-stopping ability. The power of destruction that had been released was also stopped, however it changed its course and then quickly homed in on Fenrir while it was stopped. Fenrir once again let loose its aura to break free from its frozen state, and it twisted its body to avoid being struck by Rias' demonic energy. The attack which passed through empty air caused everything in its vicinity to be annihilated. The area with a radius of a few hundred metres had been completely eradicated. Fenrir likely believed that it would not have been okay if it took a direct hit from that. Rias was able to stop even her own attacks and manipulate them. So even if Fenrir was able to dodge the demonic energy of destruction, Rias was able to change its trajectory until it hit Fenrir. This incarnation of destruction was her own, it was different from her older brother Sirzechs—. In this form, Rias had already surpassed Maou-class. Although it was still in an experimental stage and there was a lot to be improved…now was not the time for such things. Right now, it was necessary for them to fight seriously.

—My dear Ise. Ever since I decided to fight against you in the Tournament, all that's been on my mind is the thought of defeating you. But, this is only half of my determination.

—The other half comes from the desire of wanting to be by your side as you continue to grow stronger, so that I can fight together with you. Because, I don't want to become a hindrance to you—.

The battle between Vali and Crom, and the battle between Rias & Gasper and Fenrir would only continue to intensify—.

Part 4

On the west side of the field—.

It was a downtown area, and Toujou Koneko passed by along the main street. Having stopped in front of a pedestrian crossing, Koneko — Shirone was thinking about her sister. In her memories, her sister Kuroka was always by her side. Whether in joy or in sadness, her sister had always been by her side. She wasn't entirely clear on who her parents were, but to Shirone, Kuroka was her older sister, and she was also like a parent. Her whimsical older sister who always enjoyed causing mischief and trouble would always pick her up and keep her warm, regardless of whether it was a rainy day or a snowy day. On the other side of the crossing, Kuroka appeared.

"You came, Shirone."

Her beloved sister had shown her the terrifying side of a nekomata. At that time, the scene of her sister unleashing her power and killing her original master in the household of the Naberius House's branch family was something that still haunted Shirone to this day. Even though they had already reconciled, she still feared her bloodstained sister…. Afterwards, she was questioned by all kinds of people, and no matter what happened, there was no way for her to forget those

horrifying memories. …In truth, she was truly happy, and even though she knew that such fear could not visit her again, in any case…. She was too weak at that time, if she had the power to help her sister…her sister might not have had to do such a horrible thing—. But, if that really was the case, then she wouldn't have met Rias Gremory, she wouldn't have met Himejima Akeno, she wouldn't have met Kiba Yuuto, she wouldn't have met everyone else, and she wouldn't have met Hyoudou Issei either—. Despite all of the happiness that she had now, the pain of her past still lingered in her heart. All of these residual feelings were left in the depths of her heart. Kuroka said

"It's impossible to eliminate everything from that time. But, you want to defeat it, right?"

In response to her sister's question, she nodded quietly.

"…I want to surpass my past self who was weak. Please let me go beyond that."

As Shirone stood there — Kuroka smiled as she looked back at Toujou Koneko.

"You're strong and yet weak, weak and yet strong…it can't be helped. Fine, onee-chan will be your opponent nyan."

The unavoidable battle between the two sisters thus began—.

[1] Alternate reading: The Limits of Humanity and the Ultimate Evil Dragon

[2] This is the magical staff that Sun Wukong wields in Journey to the West. It has the ability to follow the commands of its owner – it can change in size and make copies of itself.

[3] Referred to throughout the chapter as the silvery-white armour, which is in fact Vali's Empireo Juggernaut Overdrive.

[4] Alternate reading: Darkness of the Beginning

[5] Alternate reading: dragons

[6] Alternate reading: Beast Ruin Princess of the Forbidden Night and True Darkness

FIST AND FANGS

Whilst the game was in full swing, on another side, Bova Tannin and Nakiri Kouchin Ouryuu were patrolling the external perimeter of the venue. They had arrived at a small park that was not far from the venue. As soon as Ouryuu stepped inside its bound, he felt a disturbing presence. He discovered suspicious figures wearing cloaks in the grove that was in a corner of the park. —They were Grim Reapers. Bova instantly reverted to his original gigantic size, and asked the Grim Reaper directly

"You are Grim Reapers of the Netherworld. What have you come here for? Tell us your names and that of your master."

The Grim Reapers did not take out their scythes, and instead responded with calmness. The Grim Reapers began to speak amongst themselves.

<<This dragon is the one who has followed that group for the past six months.>>

<<That's right, it's the dragon who follows behind the contemptible Sekiryuutei.>>

—Contemptible Sekiryuutei.

To Bova, who had been aspiring to become the [Fang of the Sekiryuutei], that was not something he could simply listen to and ignore. The Grim Reapers began to introduce themselves.

<<We are with the loyalist of the Netherworld's ruler Hades-sama, Thana—>>

However, Bova had already lost any intention of listening to them. An aura of anger erupted from his body as he said

“You don’t need to say any more. Stay there and be reduced to ashes.”

They had dared to ridicule Hyoudou Issei. In Bova’s eyes, there was no other option but annihilation.

“Well, calm down. Bobo. Let’s first ask them about their master and their purpose.”

Ouryuu said so in an attempt to pacify his comrade.

“The purpose of your visit is the two nekomata sisters who are fighting inside, is it not?”

Ouryuu pointed to the stadium as he asked. The eyes of the Grim Reapers shone with an eerie light, but they didn’t answer. However, their hostility and fighting spirit continued to grow. Ouryuu scratched the back of his head and sighed.

“Ah, indeed. Their goal is Toujou and her sister.”

One of the Grim Reapers said

<<If you let us go here, then we’ll spare your lives.>>

The Grim Reaper believed that he would respond to that. After all, he wasn’t a Devil, or an Angel, he was simply a human. That was why the Grim Reaper looked down on Ouryuu, and became confident in itself. Ouryuu tilted his head.

“What nonsense are you saying? How could I possibly let a bastard who would dare to speak poorly of Hyoudou-senpai past me?”

Although Ouryuu had acted extremely calm, neither he nor Bova had any intentions of letting them go in the first place.

“Also, Toujou is my classmate.”

If he disregarded the safety of his classmate for the sake of his own safety, it would go against Ouryuu’s moral compass. Ouryuu and Bova stepped forward as they released aura from their bodies.

“”—I’ll destroy you all here, Grim Reapers.””

Like this, the Grim Reapers who had appeared all around the stadium began to engage in battle against the [Sekiryuutei of Blazing Truth] team and [Slash Dog] team.

ABSOLUTE DEMISE. ICE PRINCESS

In a development area close to the venue—.

A shopping district was under construction, but the project had been temporarily put on hold because of the game. According to the combat plan that had been devised by Ravel Phoenix; Xenovia Quarta, Shidou Irina, Asia Argento, and Elmenhilde Karnstein of the [Sekiryuutei of Blazing Truth] team, Bennia of the Sitri team, and a few members of the [Slash Dog] team had gathered here. A troupe of Grim Reapers appeared and surrounded them. There were more than a hundred Grim Reapers in total. The one who seemed to be the leader of the Grim Reapers took a step forward.

<<—Hyoudou Issei's peerage…and the Ice Princess' group.>>

Upon hearing this, the [Slash Dog] team's Minagawa Natsume voiced her protest

"You're counting me as a part of that group!? Seriously, don't just casually skip over people like that!"

Shidou Irina also used this opportunity to complain.

"I'm not a member of the peerage, so please don't count me as one of them okay!?"

Seeing the similar reactions of these two people, the [Slash Dog] team's Samejima Kouki couldn't help but sigh.

"…These two people actually responded in the exact same way."

"How amusing, it feels as though we have another Irina."

Xenovia smiled as she watched both of their reactions. As the opposing sides got into their positions, a cool air drifted through the area. The buildings which were still under construction gradually began to freeze. A layer of frost appeared on the surface of the road as well. Looking towards the source of the cold air, there stood a beautiful woman who was dressed in a white cloak — Lavinia Reni, who had an avatar of ice standing beside her. It was a three-metre tall ice princess with six eyes and four arms—. This was Lavinia's Longinus — [Absolute Demise]. Since it was an independent-avatar type, it could manifest with this majestic form beside its owner. Minagawa Natsume quietly said

"Today's princess is half happy and half angry, so all of you Grim Reapers will be frozen, you know?"

Lavinia exhaled white breath as she said

"I can't see Va-kun's game in person, so I will not show any mercy to those who would snatch away one of my pleasures."

As soon as she finished what she had to say, Lavinia released a bluish-white aura and magical energy. In the next instant, nearly half of the Grim Reapers were frozen solid. The surrounding area had become a world of ice. Aside from her comrades, all of the buildings, roads and everything else was frozen in ice. Thick walls of ice appeared everywhere, trapping all of the Grim Reapers within them. Minagawa Natsume allowed the hawk that rested on her shoulder to transform into a strange fiend, and Samejima Kouki also allowed his white cat to transform into a huge monster that was surrounded by electric sparks. Xenovia and Irina held up their holy swords, and they smiled as they said

"Like this, you Grim Reapers won't be able to escape!"

“Since damage won’t spread to the surroundings, it makes things much easier to clean up afterwards!”

The two swordswomen prepared their stances.

The joint force of the [Sekiryuutei of Blazing Truth] team and [Slash Dog] team had turned this into a one-sided sweep—.

SLASH.2 SLASH DOG/DOG GOD OF THE FALLEN

In a large parking lot that was attached to the venue—.
It was a place that was devoid of any presences because the game was currently in progress, but a Grim Reaper with an indescribable aura appeared. Ikuse Tobio and the black dog Jin sprang out from the shadow of a car. The powerful Grim Reaper said

<<—A dog huh.>>

“That’s right, a dog.”

Tobio immediately understood that the Grim Reaper that had appeared before him was an executive-class Grim Reaper who served under Thanatos. The quality of the aura that covered his entire body was clearly different from that of a normal Grim Reaper. The Grim Reaper drew his scythe out of his own shadow as he said

<<Now that your master Azazel is gone, there should be no reason for you to stand here, right?>>

“He is a comrade whom I once fought alongside. Is that not enough of a reason for me to fight against you?”

Tobio also took out a scythe from his own shadow. His weapon also happened to be a scythe.

<<Even if your enemy is a god?>>

Tobio shrugged in response to the Grim Reaper’s question.

“Sometimes I cut gods as well.”

Spinning the scythe around in his hand, Tobio said

“Besides, Vali seems to be enjoying his battle right now, so I couldn’t possibly allow you to disturb him.”

<<Are you trying to claim that you’re related to that Hakuryuukou who has the dirty blood of Lucifer in him? Even if you’re bluffing, you should be more reasonable. That blood is cursed. One day, it could result in your death.>>

Indeed. That youth was always quite reckless. But every time, he would remember the words that Azazel had said.

“They’re a bunch of troublesome children. But…”

All of the shadows in Tobio’s surroundings began to distort. And then twisted blades began to stretch out from those shadows. Somehow, the entire area had turned into a world that was filled with a countless number of sharp blades.

“—Don’t make irresponsible remarks about Vali, Grim Reaper-san.”

The Grim Reaper lifted his scythe, and emitted a tremendous aura from his body.

<<Your soul shall be harvested by me.>>

“Let me ask you something instead. —Have you ever considered the possibility of your own soul being harvested?”

After both sides got into their stances, there was a moment of silence. In an instant — the figures of the two people and the black dog disappeared, and the crisp sound of colliding metal was heard in the sky above the carpark over and over again. Leaving behind a dark

afterimage, Tobio wielded the scythe and slashed it at the Grim Reaper from a variety of angles. The Grim Reaper released aura at Tobio, but he couldn't hit with any accuracy, and all he did was cause the cars on the ground to be destroyed. The Grim Reaper was also good at this kind of high-speed battle, and was gradually able to cope with Tobio's offense. In spite of this, the Grim Reaper had to face both Tobio and the black dog as enemies at the same time. Jin held a short blade in its mouth, and it matched its attacks with Tobio to engage in an aggressive combined assault. If Tobio's attack missed, Jin's strike would immediately compensate. The two of them didn't clash at all, and even their breathing was in sync — no, the two of them acted as if they were a single entity, and their combined attacks became a unified assault. The Grim Reaper was finally able to land a blow on Tobio, but the part that should have been cut melted into the shadows. Was it a clone? Or was he the shadow itself—. The Grim Reaper was unable to make an immediate judgment.

<<This is no longer something that a human should be capable of. So you're already that deep into the Sacred Gear?>>

The Grim Reaper decided. The Grim Reaper swung his scythe out at the approaching Jin, but Jin evaded it with lightning speed, and then swung a sharp blade at him. The Grim Reaper immediately retreated backwards — but he was unable to completely dodge, and his cloak was cut open. Tobio decided that there was no point in dragging things out any further, and so he recited the chant in order to decide the outcome in an instant—. —Indeed, the hunt of darkness was about to begin. Shadows, black fog, and darkness assembled all around Ikuse Tobio. Various kinds of darkness gathered around him, and sharp blades protruded out from his surroundings. Quietly and deeply, curse-like words were woven together into a chant.

<<—I sing for the slaying of a thousand humans>>

Tobio and Jin became shrouded in darkness. The jet-black haze spread, and then covered everything in the surrounding area.

<<—I celebrate the slaying of ten thousand goblins>>

His limbs gradually dissolved into the darkness, and turned into something with an irregular shape.

<<—The name submerged in total darkness, that of the imitation god who drifts through the polar night>>

Tobio's body assimilated with the darkness, and then he said—.

<<—Thou will perish by mine own black blade>>

This was a ritual that turned something with a human shape into a thing that differed from a human.

<<—To be something absurd, the creator of the deformed>>

After Ikuse Tobio recited the final verse, the black dog Jin let out a clear howl—.

Aooooooooohhh….

What appeared in front of the Grim Reaper was a God of the Blade in a humanoid shape wearing a cloak of darkness—. A hunter who was tailed by a large <<Dog>> of darkness appeared—. —Balance Breaker, Night Celestial Slash Dogs. The Grim Reaper couldn't help but exclaim in admiration.

<<I see…it's no wonder that you're considered to be one of the abnormal people among the Longinus possessors.>>

[No, I believe that the majority of the Longinus possessors of this generation are abnormal.]

After saying so, Tobio's figure disappeared. The Grim Reaper sensed a presence, and so he swung his scythe behind him — but all that was left was the residual darkness.

[Too slow.]

Slash Dog was equipped with a scythe in each hand — Tobio slashed down with them to form the shape of a cross. Although the Grim Reaper had managed to evade that attack, it was still far from enough. *Zah*! —With that sound, the Grim Reaper felt the very soul in his body being cut. The aura that was released by Slash Dog's scythes could penetrate even the inside of a Grim Reaper's body. At the same time, Jin chased from behind and swung a sharp blade, tearing through the Grim Reaper's body. The blade that Jin held had cursed words engraved onto it, and that curse spread within the Grim Reapers body like fire, destroying the Grim Reaper from within. Facing the immobile Grim Reaper, Tobio took the two scythes and transformed them into a single massive scythe, and swiftly swung it down.

<<……! A god of death…being killed…!>>

[This is a blade that is said to be capable of cutting even a god, so that's only natural. —No matter who my opponent is, I will definitely be able to cut them.]

Tobio slashed his scythe down vertically, while Jin flicked its blade horizontally. The Grim Reaper was torn asunder in the shape of a cross—.

<<You dog…!>>

[That’s right, a dog. But, instead of fangs, everything is cut apart by—]

As the Grim Reaper disappeared, Tobio, the Slash Dog, and his clone Jin stood side by side.

[This <<blade>>.]

This was the moment in which a Grim Reaper’s soul was cut and harvested—. After Tobio killed Thanatos’ executive-class Grim Reaper, he felt a mighty aura in the sky above the venue. It was probably the arrival of Thanatos himself. —But, this was a calculation that had already been accounted for in the combat plan. Ravel Phoenix had devised a strategy to deal with the attack of a god. Moreover, the reference for it came from the battle against the Evil God Loki—. What happened when Loki appeared in front of the Two Heavenly Dragons again? The answer had been deployed there. As he looked up into the distance, he saw Thanatos appear in the sky above the stadium whilst emitting a tremendous aura. However, in the next instant, a large transportation magic circle appeared in the sky above the venue. And then, Thanatos was caught within it—.

[Now then, I’m leaving the rest up to you. Sekiryuutei.]

The opponent who was an ultimate-class Grim Reaper had been entrusted to the youth who had the protection of a Dragon God—. A group of Grim Reapers with an unsettling aura appeared nearby Tobio again. Their numbers could easily exceed a hundred. The battle between Slash Dog and the Grim Reapers would have to continue—.

LIFE.5 THE DEATH GOD AND THE HYOUDOU FAMILY'S BREAST TECHNIQUE

Part 1

I — Hyoudou Issei, waited for the arrival of that person within the barrier that Rossweisse-san and Bina-shi had created. Our location was a wilderness area that was a far distance away from [Fafnir Stadium]. After listening to Ravel's strategy plan, I came here. The plan was extremely simple. If we continued to defeat the Grim Reapers serving below him, Thanatos would eventually make his own entrance in person as the leader. By aiming for the instant that he appeared, we could use the transportation magic circle technique that was capable of sending even Loki away. It would have caused a lot of trouble if a legendary Grim Reaper ran amok near the venue, so we decided on a wilderness area where it wouldn't matter no matter how much destruction was caused. Rossweisse-san who specialised in sealing techniques was accompanied by Bina-shi, but they would not be stepping forward unless I was defeated. This was the combat strategy that Ravel had come up with to protect the audience members who were watching the game, and also to protect her best friend Koneko-chan. As for the final stage of this strategy, after confirming the attack of the Grim Reapers, we would send out assistance teams to Sairaorg-san and Dulio. It would be helpful to have Sairaorg-san and Dulio in this battle against Thanatos, but they were unable to immediately rush over, so Ravel requested support from the various factions. …If those two arrive, this battle will be much easier…I wonder if they can make it in time? They're

already busy enough trying to deal with the riots caused by the mystery Devils in their territories…. I equipped my crimson armour, and after waiting for a while — a transportation magic circle appeared before me. The one who emerged from the magic circle was a Grim Reaper with a tremendous aura, and an exquisitely decorated cloak. The Grim Reaper — Thanatos looked around at his surroundings whilst wearing his skull mask, and then directed his eyes back towards me again.

<<A forced transfer…. Indeed, I heard that the same thing happened to Loki. It's quite a clever technique.>>

A scythe appeared in Thanatos' hand. Its blade exuded a potent aura—. I calmly asked

"Why are you doing something like this?"

<<The reason — there is more than one.>>

Thanatos gradually shortened the distance between us as he responded to my question.

<<First of all, in order to prevent the leakage of research data on artificial Super Devils, it must be completely destroyed.>>

"It would be fine to leave that to us to deal with, but you don't appear to be satisfied with that. Is it because there was something wrong with us finding out about the research?"

<<I want to completely vanquish all of the research evidence before Hades-sama finds out about it.>>

…Wasn't it meant to be for Hades?

"…Why?"

I couldn't help but ask.

<<…It's just like the Devils' side, Sekiryuutei. We are not entirely unified. …But, everything that I do is for the sake of the Netherworld's future that I envision.>>

Not entirely unified huh. Regardless of whether it was Orcus-san of the conservative faction or Thanatos here, the Netherworld seemed to have complex problems of its own.

"…Well, what are the other reasons?"

<<Therefore, it is necessary to eliminate everyone who carries that research data. In order to prevent Hades-sama from obtaining any relevant information at all.>>

So that's why…that's the reason why he targeted Koneko-chan…!

"I won't allow you to interfere with Koneko-chan and Kuroka."

<<That is fine. That is precisely why you are the Sekiryuutei of this era.>>

Thanatos erected his index finger.

<<Another reason…is extremely simple. My comrade Pluto was defeated at the hands of the Hakuryuukou. But he shouldn't have felt dissatisfied with that. He was able to touch the power of a Heavenly Dragon which can reach even a god—. As far as I'm concerned, I also would like to have a taste of your power, as you are considered to be the Strongest Sekiryuutei in History.>>

……In the end, it doesn't seem like we can continue to talk like this. Not only are you targeting Koneko-chan, you're also hoping to fight

against me. I, no, we only wanted to protect the peace! I got into a fighting stance.

"Even if you are a god — I will destroy you. This is not a game. I am the [Sekiryuutei of Blazing Truth], and I am also the [Pawn] of the [Crimson-Haired Ruin Princess]."

<<Please do try to fulfil my request, Hyoudou Issei. Allow this god of death to witness your full power.>>

Thanatos swung his large scythe down. This marked the beginning of my battle against the ultimate-class Grim Reaper. As I charged forth, I fired off several Dragon Shots at the same time! Thanatos left behind a black and blue afterimage as he dodged with an insanely high speed. I corrected the direction of my Dragon Shot, and I continued to fire it towards Thanatos as I approached! My demonic energy blasts all landed direct hits — but Thanatos was unscathed as he continued to approach me! So an attack on the level of a Dragon Shot isn't even enough to scratch him huh! Even if I released my wyverns, they would easily be knocked down. Thanatos swung his scythe, and I quickly evaded it…the scythe cut through the ground's surface. Every time Thanatos swung his scythe, a large scar would be left on the surface of the ground. He had such incredible power that every single movement of his scythe was enough to change the shape of the terrain—. If his ordinary attacks had so much power behind them, then he was far stronger than Pluto was! In order to move in for a melee attack, I charged towards Thanatos, and I began to punch him when we were almost face to face. However, it felt as though I was hitting air, and there was no solid sensation or feedback that I had actually hit him. And unbeknownst to me, Thanatos had circled behind and he prepared to swing down his scythe. What I was hitting had actually been an afterimage! I activated the Crimson

Blaster cannons in my wings and fired them at Thanatos! As I rotated on the spot to adjust my stance, I extended Ascalon out of my left arm and thrust it towards Thanatos. Before he could disappear and leave his afterimage behind, I used the power of [Penetrate]!

[Penetrate!!]

The ability that allowed me to pass through any object had been infused into Ascalon. Thinking that it would be bad if he was hit by that, Thanatos immediately retreated backwards. I instantly reacted and flew forwards — I flew above Thanatos and then released my cannon blast.

“Crimson Blasterrrrrrrrrr!”

A tremendous bombardment of aura descended towards Thanatos who was right below me. —But, it missed him, and once again, Thanatos circled around behind me! I flapped my dragon wings to turn my body around, and Thanatos used his scythe to parry Ascalon! When our blades clashed, Thanatos laughed

<<Indeed, you’re very strong. But it should be extremely clear after this brief encounter. —In this form, you have no chance of winning.>>

……It was something that I knew from the very beginning! But, if it’s that form, then…! —How can I possibly tolerate a provocation like that? I flew away from Thanatos to put some distance in between us. Say, Ddraig. Continuing on like this would just be a waste of stamina, right?

[That’s right, and in the off-chance that you don’t respond well enough, you could suffer a serious amount of damage. True [Queen]

is no match for him at all. It wouldn't make much of a difference even if you used partial Dragon Deification.]

Then, even if there is a time limit, I need to decide the outcome here. It's also quite difficult to wait for both Sairaorg-san and Dulio to arrive. I took a deep breath, and then recited the chant of power.

"—The Crimson Red Dragon dwelling within me, awaken from your dominance"

A dazzling crimson glow was emitted from the jewel of my right gauntlet.

[—The Crimson Heavenly Dragon I possess within me, rise up to become a King]

A jet-black aura was released from the jewel of my left gauntlet.

"—The jet-black God of Infinity"

An immense crimson aura enveloped my entire body—.

[—The glorious God of Dreams]

The jet-black aura that symbolised infinity was then encased over it.

"[Watch over the false forbidden existence we shall become that transcends the boundaries]"

My crimson armour was then tinged with a jet-black pattern. The power of the Dragon God that embodied the infinite had been unleashed.

"[—We shall dance like radiance within the inferno]"

“<<[D∞D!! D∞D D∞D!! D∞D D∞D D∞D!!!! D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D!!!!!! D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D!!!!!!!!]>>”

All of the jewels resounded with a soul-penetrating voice that echoed out [D∞D!!]. A ∞ symbol emerged on all of the jewels!

“[<<Dragon ∞ Drive !!!!!!>>]”

After undergoing Pseudo-Dragon Deification, I charged straight towards Thanatos, and the aftermath of that caused all of the surrounding scenery to be blown away. I thrust my aura-coated fists across! Thanatos simply left behind an afterimage as he evaded my attack — but my fist which had pierced through the empty air caused the ground beneath it to crumble. Upon watching the scene unfold before his very eyes, Thanatos chuckled

<<Such inconceivable offensive power! Indeed, if I take a direct hit, then I’ll surely be blown away!>>

“I’m going to say this first — I’m angry! You’re interfering with the girls who have promised their futures to me, and also the important match of my lifelong rival!”

After saying that, I began to chase Thanatos, and threw punches and kicks at him at close range whilst moving at a godlike speed! I didn’t feel the sensation of having hit him, but unlike before, my opponent no longer had any breathing room to spare. His cloak was badly torn up during his attempts to evade, and even his scythe became deformed. After Thanatos took a new scythe out of nowhere again, he said

<<So you're protecting not just the women, but even the Hakuryuukou! You're truly interesting! Is this a so-called camaraderie?>>

"This is a game between the women that I fell in love with, and also the man that I appreciate as my rival. I've been looking forward to this match far more than anyone else. —After I defeat you, and cut you down, I'm going to watch the game. It's that simple!"

Thanatos moved with such speed that the residual afterimages that he left behind surrounded me. Could they possibly be clones? The clones of Thanatos swung their scythes towards me from every single direction, but I used my fists to repel all of them. However, the clones seemed to have a perfect coordination, and I was cut by them all at once. In my mind, I suddenly recalled the knowledge that a Grim Reaper's scythe could cut even the soul. But even though I had been cut, my armour was fine, and my body was completely unharmed as well. Thanatos couldn't help but feel astonished by this.

<<—What!? I cut you with my scythe, but I can't cut your soul!? Could it be that even your soul has the power of Ophis!?>>

…That's right, my strength is an manifestation of Ophis' power. Since Ophis represents the infinite, I suppose it isn't surprising that her power can provide this level of protection. Moreover, my body itself exists thanks to Great Red and Ophis, and it was formed from a combination of their powers.

[5!]

—Not good! The countdown doesn't wait for anyone! This form can only be maintained for ten seconds. In order to decide the

outcome quickly, I made preparations to use ∞ Blaster. —But an unknown pattern appeared on my four cannons.

<<When you attacked, I used a sealing technique on your cannons! Although I can't completely seal them off, I don't think you'll be able to lift it before the countdown ends!>>

Kuh! He actually used that kind of technique as well! I began to try and gather my aura and direct it towards the barrels of my cannons — but I was unable to properly send my draconic power into them!

[8! 9!]

Whilst trying my best to use my cannons, the countdown continued to tick! With this amount of time, it won't be enough for me to open the armour on my chest to use Longinus Smasher! Left with no other choice, I increased the aura in my arms to their utmost limit!

"<<[D∞D!! D∞D D∞D!! D∞D D∞D D∞D!!!! D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D!!!!!! D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D!!!!!!!!]>>"

An unbelievable mass of aura gathered in my hands, and I unleashed it towards Thanatos all at once! The enormous crimson Dragon Shot was fired off towards Thanatos. —But, Thanatos was well-accustomed to high-speed manoeuvres, and he was able to dodge it! If my Dragon Shot that was evaded crashes into the barrier that Rossweisse-san made, then things will be bad. I had no choice but to make the Dragon Shot collapse in on itself. The remnants of that crimson aura scattered in the air.

[10!]

As soon as the countdown finished, Dragon Deification was lifted, and I reverted back to my crimson armour. …An instant wave of fatigue hit me. It was the repercussion of Dragon Deification. My stamina was almost completely exhausted…! The absolute flames which can burn even a god to ashes — I can't use [Blazing Inferno of Scorching Flames]. I might be able to establish superiority if I use that move…but if Thanatos approaches Rossweisse-san or Bina-shi with those flames and spreads the flames that cannot be extinguished to their bodies, then….

[That's right, precisely because those are the ultimate flames, there are limitations on their use. Especially under circumstances where you have allies present, it cannot be freely used. If the flames spread to your allies, then there'll have been no point.]

…It was precisely because those flames were so powerful that there was a terrifying side to them. No, even with Dragon Deification, if I didn't control it properly, then it could have a significant impact on the world, so it was necessary to be careful when using it. I gasped for air as Thanatos approached me.

<<You are able to fight on equal footing against gods, and the only weakness that you currently have is your time limit. If you face a god-class…no, even if you face a Maou-class opponent, they would be able to outlast that ten second countdown. If that happens, then it's not possible to fight equally against a god with just your crimson armour.>>

…That is indeed my weakness. But that's all I can rely on right now to fight. Thanatos began to attack me! Because I had consumed an immense amount of stamina, my movements became slow, and the ultimate-class Grim Reaper was able to hit me easily. He slashed at me with his scythe! A portion of my crimson armour was shattered

as my abdomen took a direct blow. An intense pain struck my entire body…. But within my body — it didn't feel as though my soul had been damaged. Thanatos once again felt surprised by the result before his eyes.

<<…Even when Dragon Deification has been lifted, it seems I still can't harvest your soul. Your body contains a terrifying power, and this is the best evidence of that. If it is impossible to destroy your body together with your soul, then it is impossible to defeat you.>>

So even in this state, the special ability of Grim Reapers is still invalid to me huh. Ddraig said

[That's right partner, your soul has a power that rivals Ophis' curse. Even if it's the technique of a god-class being, it cannot touch your soul, partner. So from the very beginning, the scythe of a Grim Reaper has had no effect on you. All it can be used for is physical damage.]

Since when did this effect begin from? Did it manifest the first time that I underwent Dragon Deification?

[It is unclear, but the power that has flowed over from Ophis has definitely strengthened it. Her spawn Lilith is also by your side, and that makes the effect even more remarkable. This is just my speculation, but that person…the Dragon God of Infinity wants to make you the third Dragon God, partner.]

So does the same go for Vali? Doesn't his Maouification borrow Ophis' power as well?

[Perhaps the Two Heavenly Dragons will reach Dragon God-class at the same time.]

I see…although it seems as though the Dragon God at my house acts freely and doesn't think about much, I didn't imagine that she had such deep plans. Having said that, the current situation is still quite difficult to overturn…. Rossweisse-san was also looking over at me with worry, and Bina-shi had also stated that she would join the battle if things became too dangerous…. Do we have no choice but to release the barrier so that the three of us can fight against Thanatos together? But for Thanatos, his priority would be to transport himself away so that he could go after Koneko-chan—. The original purpose of this barrier was to seal off the quick movements of this Grim Reaper. Even if we told him where that hair ornament was currently stored, Thanatos already said that he would completely eliminate everyone related to the research, so that would be meaningless. Just as I racked my brains in distress about what the next best course of action was, Thanatos suddenly said

<<…I can feel three souls within your body. There's you and the [Welsh Dragon] Ddraig…so who is the other person?>>

This Grim Reaper-sama just mentioned some incomprehensible words! Neither Ddraig nor I could understand, but then a voice suddenly echoed out from my jewel.

[Ise, it's jii-chan.]

…….

….

…The owner of that voice was so unexpected that my mind completely blanked out, and I froze in astonishment. However, that voice spoke again.

[Ise, it's me. Your grandfather.]

—Indeed, it's jiiiii-chaaaaan!

"Jii-chan!?"

[Your grandfather!?]

Ddraig was surprised too! The fact that my grandfather's voice had come out from his own jewel was probably quite shocking! Even so, if even Ddraig couldn't have expected this, it seems like it's pretty amazing!?

[This is impossible! Just what kind of ability did you use to enter my Sacred Gear whilst we were talking!?]

The tone of Ddraig's voice was coloured in surprise, but jii-chan calmly answered

[I asked the great Shaka-sama, and he did something. Of course, the Dragon God-sama also said that she wanted to help.]

Ddraig let out an agonised voice.

[Shaka and Ophis!? Well, of course they would be able to intervene!]

Is that possible!? I'm surprised too! I couldn't keep up with this pace at all! Jii-chan said

[It looks like you're in a pinch. Ise, I've heard that you're pretty good at developing breast techniques.]

"No, saying I'm good…although I have developed some, what has that got to do with this!?"

Dress Break and Pailingual are both limited to women, and hence they have no effect on Thanatos!

[Ise, now is the time to realise the dream of that time. It's what we often spoke about when we used to play with plastic models of robots and space battleships.]

As he said that rather abruptly, jii-chan's overflowing vigour caused the jewels of my armour to shine brightly!

[Let me help you recall those childhood memories you spent with me!]

In the next instant, I was forced to rekindle the memories of my childhood—.

While at jii-chan's house in the countryside, I went with jii-chan to a nearby model store to buy plastic models of robots and spaceships with him. Jii-chan often bought the models and figures of female characters that appeared in the franchise…. He would always order it from that model shop where he would deliberately go to pick it up—. I was envious of the figures that jii-chan bought. I really wanted them, but jii-chan said

"If you're not an adult, you can't buy these."

Citing that as the reason, he didn't buy them for me. In a corridor by the courtyard of the house, jii-chan and I played with the models—. To be precise, most of them were made by me, and I couldn't help but feel fascinated by the cool robots and space battleships. I referred to the instruction manuals as I assembled them, whilst jii-chan looked at his ero magazines beside me while touching his ero figures…. I looked with pride at my accomplishments, while jii-chan said

"Between Ise's model and jii-chan's figure, let's see which one is stronger."

I put the robot into a cool position to attack, and jii-chan moved his figure to respond to it.

“Take this, jii-chan. Wave cannon!”

“Too bad! This figure onee-san’s oppai barrier allow her to deflect the wave cannon!”

“Eh! Jii-chan, that’s not fair! What’s an oppai barrier!?”

“You will understand one day! No matter what kind of attack it is, and no matter how powerful the enemy is, they will never defeat oppai. You like oppai too, right?”

“Mmhmm! I love them!”

Upon hearing my reply, jii-chan revealed a satisfied smile as he rubbed my head.

“Oppai contain the ultimate power. That’s why, when robots and space battleships attack, they must gather the power of oppai in order to attack. Oppai beam! Oppai wave cannon! Like that. In this way, regardless of whether you’ve built a robot or a space battleship, you’ll be able to defeat jii-chan’s ero figure, Ise.”

“That’s amazing, jii-chan! It sounds really cool, but I don’t get it at all!”

“Hahaha! You don’t understand huh! Well to be honest, I don’t really understand it either! But, oppai are the strongest. So long as you have the power of oppai, you’ll be able to overcome any difficulties, no matter what they are! Oppai!”

“Oppai!”

“Alright, Ise. Hurry up and use that robot’s gun to fire an oppai beam. With that, you might be able to beat jii-chan’s ero figure.”

“Oppai Beam!”

“Ugyaaahh! I – have — been — beaten — ah —”

Jii-chan and I continued to play around with models and figures using oppai attacks until the sun sank beneath the horizon—.

I finally remembered that early childhood memory. Tears streamed out of my eyes as I wept.

—Aaaaaahhh, this is a brutal memory! Why did jii-chan make me remember this kind of thing at such a crucial moment, jiiiiiiii-chaaaaaaaaan! However, jii-chan said.

[—Preparing wave cannon.]

At that time, the tail of my armour — it began to move as if it had a will of itself. It wasn’t in accordance to my will, nor was it the intention of Ddraig. That tail seemed to be aiming for something. My tail — it actually extended! And it rushed straight towards Rossweisse-san!

“Eh!? What’s happening!?”

The tail of my armour suddenly stretched, and Rossweisse-san didn’t even have any time to react as my tail reached Rossweisse-san’s oppai. The tip of the tail spread open, and then covered Rossweisse-san’s oppai as it latched on! *Dokun dokun*…. My tail began to pulse.

“…Ahm! Aaahh!”

Rossweisse-san let out a sensual moan. My tail which was connected to her seemed to be absorbing something from her chest! Jii-chan said

[Gather the power of oppai, and then let out a big one! —That's right, it's a wave cannon!]

The cannons of my armour automatically aimed at Thanatos with apparent confidence!

[Don't worry, jii-chan is here by your side to help out. I'm thoroughly aware of your ero desires.]

[W-What is this!? P-Partner! Inside me, the inside of the Sacred Gear is being used by your grandfather!? Is this something that your grandfather is even capable of doing!?]

"…He is my grandfather. It wouldn't be a surprise if he was the origin of my ero nature…"

[Are you serious!? You're just going to accept this!? Do I also have to face this reality!?]

Ddraig was flabbergasted—. It was inevitable. Although I wasn't too sure about things, it did appear that jii-chan was somehow fiddling around inside the Sacred Gear. Indeed, he was the origin of my ero nature…. To be honest, I'm pretty confused as well! What exactly is jii-chan doing!?

[I accumulated virtues whilst in Paradise. I'm sure the great Shaka-sama will also be delighted.]

Are you sure!? What are these 'virtues' that you speak of!? Moreover, how is this related to Shaka-sama!?

“There is no mistake. This is Siddartha’s — Shaka Nyorai’s request.”

Another mysterious voice came out!

“Sekiryuutei who controls breasts. I am Kannon Bodhisattva [1]. After listening to the request of your grandfather Hyoudou Juuzou, I came to help you.”

Kannon-sama!? What’s going on!? What’s what!? What on earth is happening!?

[Even Kannon Bodhisattva has come out!? Do the mythology systems even work like this!?]

Ddraig couldn’t help but cry out. Kannon-sama said

“Your song has made many people smile even in Paradise. The people who have passed away can sing and dance even more joyously in Paradise, and we are truly grateful to you for birthing such a song. This is a small token of gratitude from the Buddhas.”

My song…actually has such a far-reaching influence…! This time, it was Thanatos’ turn to feel surprised.

<<T-This can’t be possible! Shaka Nyorai…and even Kannon Bodhisattva are helping the Sekiryuutei!?>>

Thanatos lifted his scythe up, and then rushed towards me — Kannon Bodhisattva created a halo of light behind me, and Thanatos was then bathed in that light!

<<Guuaah! Such intense light!>>

Thanatos seemed to fear the light that was released by the Bodhisattva-sama and was forced to retreat. Meanwhile, a stream of energy (?) was drawn from Rossweisse-san’s oppai, and an incredible

aura began to gather at the cannons of my crimson armour. Jii-chan said

[Thanks to the power of Kannon-sama, that silver-haired young lady's oppai power has already been converted into demonic energy.]

I was no longer sure of what to even say about the situation before my eyes, but my cannons had already gathered a power that was capable of rivalling the power of Dragon Deification's ∞ Blaster.

"…Mmn, aaahh!"

As my tail continued to suck on Rossweisse-san's oppai, Rossweisse-san's body continued to tremble without rest and she let out passionate moans! On my jewels — the number 96 appeared! This was exactly the same number as Rossweisse-san's bust size!

[Come on, Ise. Get ready. Its name — you will decide on the name of the wave cannon yourself.]

He gave me another difficult problem. …F-Fine, I've already named quite a few different techniques, so I'll show you….

"—How about Nyuutron Beam Cannon [2]…"

[Hmm, although I don't know what that 'nyuutron' is, it's fine as long as it sounds good.]

What are you complaining about!? It's a good name that I had to come up with on the spot, so you should give it some more respect! Jii-chan said to Rossweisse-san

[You are Rossweisse-san, yes? —For the sake of the future, please endure this embarrassment for now. This is your role as a woman.]

“—Mmm. …I feel like I understand, yet I don’t understand at the same time…but I can hear it in my chest.”

Rossweisse-san!? Are you just going to accept that!? Aren’t you the least bit confused about this chaotic development!?

[Ise, this cannon blast will depend on the size of a woman’s bust, and its power will vary based on that. Rossweisse has nice and big breasts, so you’ve been able to obtain an astounding amount of power. However, if the number was in the triple-digits, you might even be able to gain a much more absurd power.]

B-Based on bust size, its power can accordingly change. —Oppai in the triple-digits. In my mind, I imagined Akeno-san….

[It’s ready to go!]

With jii-chan’s yell, the muzzle of the cannons also locked onto Thanatos completely!

“Thanatos!”

I shouted the name of the Grim Reaper as I prepared to fire the cannons. Thanatos held his scythe up, and began to drift away from me. It was clear to him that taking a direct hit from this would not be good.

“—You must be defeated here.”

But, Bina-shi clearly understood that the outcome of the battle would be decided in this moment, so she stopped assisting Rossweisse-san to hold the barrier, and she joined the battle whilst releasing her demonic energy. In order to stop Thanatos, Bina-shi unleashed an enormous blast of aura. Because it was a Maou-class attack, even as an ultimate-class Grim Reaper, he wanted to avoid a

direct hit, and so he hurriedly retreated away from it. I once again corrected the angle of my cannons' trajectory, and aimed for the moment at which Thanatos would land—.

"—Nyuutron Beam Cannon, fireeeeee!"

An enormous — pink aura flew out from the muzzle of my cannons. Sparkling with the radiance of oppai power, it mercilessly swallowed Thanatos. The blast that was on par with ∞ Blaster blew aware the entire landscape and surrounding area—.

After the cannon blast finished, the wilderness had undergone a tremendous change, as a large crater was left behind in the wasteland…. Thanatos had collapsed at the bottom of the crater. As I approached him, Thanatos said to me

<<…A-A splendid fight, Sekiryuutei…>>

They were words of praise for me.

<<In the near future, I think you might become a deterrence who can destroy even those who are god-class beings…fafafa!>>

Revealing a complicated expression, Thanatos continued to laugh with satisfaction

<<…Fafafa, Hades-sama…you curse the Three Factions more than anyone else…you've been imprisoned far more than anyone else……the Netherworld…will never be anything more than the Netherworld…>>

Leaving only those words behind, Thantos lost consciousness and fainted—.

"Sorry for the wait!"

“Sorry for taking so long.”

A short while later, Sairaorg-san and Dulio finally arrived as a result of Ravel’s negotiations…but they were both extremely surprised to see that I had almost single-handedly defeated Thanatos. We…with the help of jii-chan and Kannon-sama had stopped Thanatos’ ambition—.

Part 2

After we defeated Thanatos, we handed our defeated opponent over to Sairaorg-san and Dulio so that they could transfer him over to Beelzebub-sama’s interrogation unit via a magic circle. We communicated the news that we had defeated Thanatos to our comrades, and from what we could hear, it appeared as though the Grim Reapers on the other sides had also surrendered because their master had been defeated in battle.

“As expected of you, Ise-sama!”

In order to investigate the post-battle situation, Ravel had hurried over to my side. She also began to liaise with the various other parties. With the battle now over, I turned around to look at Rossweisse-san. —The power of her oppai had been absorbed, and thus they had temporarily become flat. It was the same as when I had borrowed power from Rias in the past, as her oppai had become flat as well. I could still remember the deep sorrow I felt at the time, and I never expected that the same phenomenon would be triggered again this time. Tears silently streamed down my cheeks. Aaahhh, Rossweisse-san’s beautiful oppaaaiiii!

[Don’t worry, they’ll return to their original size before long, so be at ease.]

—Jii-chan said to me…. Kannon-sama had left after that, but it seemed as though jii-chan was still here. Well, since this incident has come to a somewhat peaceful end, I want to tell Koneko-chan and the others, but they’re still in the midst of a match. I’ll have to tell them after the game is over. Just as those thoughts streamed through my mind, jii-chan spoke to me again

[No, you can probably speak to them. Just then, I tried installing various interesting features into your Sacred Gear. Ise, don’t you have the ability called Pailingual? I tried to add something onto it.]

What is jii-chan saying!?

[Nnn, no, it’s fine…]

Ddraig no longer had any intention of voicing his objections! Has he already given up!? Jii-chan said

[Through oppai, you can communicate with oppai that are far away. Although it seems as though there are a lot of conditions that have to be satisfied, the girls in the game should be able to hear your voice.]

Even if you say that…talking with oppai that are far away, what are you even going on about!? After asking jii-chan about the specific method, I called Ravel over to my side.

“Ise-sama, what is it?”

Ravel looked at me with a puzzled expression.

“Ravel, let me borrow your oppai. I want to say a few things to Koneko-chan.”

“…I-Ise-sama, please tell me in a little more detail.”

I explained the situation to the baffled Ravel — and for some odd reason, she seemed to understand, and she began to nod deeply!

“I understand. Please try it.”

Ravel swiftly revealed her bare chest, and her refreshing oppai bounced out in front of me! Ravel!!!! I’m ecstatic that I get to see such wonderful oppai with my eyes, but aren’t you way too trusting of my words!? No, I guess you have immense trust in my breast techniques…! The situation unfolding before me was difficult to put into words. I followed jii-chan’s instructions to imagine the person whom I wanted to speak to in my mind, while I used my left hand to squeeze Ravel’s beautiful right breast. An extremely pleasurable sensation coursed through my hand! I began to think about Koneko-chan and Kuroka.

“…Ah.”

A sensitive murmur escaped from Ravel’s mouth. And then, after having a strong will to connect with them, I moved my right hand to her left nipple — and pressed! My finger was teased with the ultimate sensation!

“…Iyaan!”

Ravel’s breath had a feverish heat. After releasing my pressed finger, I spoke to her oppai.

“Koneko-chan. Koneko-chan. Kuroka too. Can you hear me?”

Truthfully speaking, this was a situation in which I was speaking to oppai…but what I received was a startling response

<<…Ise-senpai? Is it Ise-senpai?>>

—It was Koneko-chan's voice! I really reached her! I wonder what will happen to my breast techniques…. I couldn't even understand this myself anymore, so it was quite scary.

<<Sekiryuutei-chan? What is this? I can also hear Shirone's voice, and it's almost like we're having a conversation with our souls…>>

I could also hear Kuroka's voice. It seemed as though I had successfully formed a connection with those two. Jii-chan said that this was a skill that allowed for direct dialogue between psyches which were far away from me (women only). This was my other new technique — [Pai Phone [3]]. Jii-chan is seriously amazing. In such a short span of time, he's actually revealed so many new possibilities…! Perhaps jii-chan is a specialist who can draw out my talent in this area! Jii-chan's laughs were transmitted out of the jewel

[Kakaka, I'm not that great. All I've done is remind you of the dreams and ambitions that you've held since early childhood, Ise. The dreams and goals that you imagined as a child can easily become a pillar of foundation throughout your lifetime.]

…I-I see. I certainly do think that's when my foundation began…. I quickly told Koneko-chan and Kuroka about my technique and the news that Thanatos had been defeated. The two of them were currently engaged in a fateful confrontation. They continued to talk to me in their minds whilst fighting. Although I felt a bit guilty about interfering with their duel, I still had to convey to them that they

were safe, and then quickly hang up. All of a sudden, Koneko-chan asked me in surprise.

<<Ise-senpai, you used Ravel's breasts to call us, right?>>

Ravel was also able to listen in, and so she replied

"No, right now, I am currently just a telephone to maintain the spiritual connection between Ise-sama and Koneko-san. I'm fine just as a phone."

<<H-How could…>>

Upon hearing her friend's preparedness, Koneko-chan seemed to have been rather shocked. On that topic, communication speed and the connection status also differ depending on the oppai. After a series of subsequent investigations, Ravel's oppai were found to be the most suitable breasts by far for communication.

<<To be honest, I really want to cut off this phone call…>>

Koneko-chan said, but Kuroka seemed extremely interested instead.

<<In that case, let's decide the winner while Sekiryuutei-chan is listening, Shirone!>>

Kuroka issued a challenge.

<<The one who wins gets to become his bride. How's that?>>

<<—! I…will become Ise-senpai's bride! I won't back down on this even if it's nee-sama!>>

The two sisters are fighting over me huh. …I could no longer hold back, and I let all of the emotions that were bottled up in my heart flood out.

“…No, that won’t do.”

Koneko-chan had already said that she wanted to become my bride. Kuroka had said that she wanted to have my children, to be by my side, and to become my family—. I have to respond to them. As the Sekiryuutei! As Hyoudou Issei! I have to give them a good response!

“I — no matter who wins, I’ll make both of you my brides! If you’re going to decide who my bride is with this kind of outcome, then I won’t be a true Harem King! Koneko-chan!”

I made a clear and plain declaration.

“I accept your proposal! Please be my bride!”

<<—Mmm. ……Yes.>>

I got an answer. And with that flow, I continued speaking to the other person!

“And, Kuroka!”

<<W-Wah nya!?>>

After listening to the proposal to her sister, she was still engrossed in surprise and hadn’t yet come back to her senses, so she let out a sluggish murmur. But I didn’t care as I continued to ask

“Are you in love with me? Truly?”

Kuroka replied in an earnest tone

<<…In the beginning, I only thought of you as a substitute for Vali. Vali's rival. When I'm together with you, my heart beats in a joyful rhythm, and it's fun just to hang out with you. I only wanted children in the past, a Heavenly Dragon's children…I just wanted strong genes. If Vali couldn't, then I'd choose you. But, things are different now. …You're incorrigibly stupid, and hopelessly honest. Even though you're a pervert, and an idiot after all…even though you just had to be gentle towards Shirone, you took good care of me as well…you gave us sisters a peaceful place to live…. If I'm together with you…then I feel at ease. When I see your smile, my heart becomes filled with love…>>

The voice of Kuroka's heart — included heartfelt tears.

<<…For people like us, you went and took on such a stupid fight. Surely, your body is covered in wounds, right? Even though your opponent was a god…. Even if they are a god, you'll protect us from their hands, so how could I possibly dislike a man like that!? Mmm, that's right, ever since a long time ago, I fell hopelessly in love with the man named Hyoudou Issei…I love you.>>

After listening to Kuroka's confession, I bluntly answered her.

"I understand. I also love you, you know? How could I not realise that from a girl who would ask me to give her my genes? Even so, watching your ordinary life…although I was a bit worried, you made sure that your little sister Koneko-chan always came first, and I think a gentle sister like that is sure to be a good woman."

Kuroka was a hopelessly mischievous cat, and our initial encounter was the worst. She had released that toxic fog. She was usually lazy, and liked playing pranks…. But, it was clear to me that she was a kind woman. She was a girl who saw her little sister as a more important

existence than anyone else. She was a girl who prayed for peace more than anyone else. I knew all of this!

“Are you okay with me?”

Kuroka immediately answered my question.

<<It must be you. Sekiryuutei-chan…no, Ise! I want to have children with the gentle you!>>

Since that’s the case, I’ll make up my mind. I faced Ravel’s oppai, and cried out

“In that case, together with Koneko-chan — be my briiiiiiiiiiiiidddee!”

In the middle of the wilderness, I let out a cry of love towards a pair of oppai—.

Part 3

After the battle against Thanatos, we returned to [Fafnir Stadium] — we headed towards the audience area. All of my comrades had gathered at the entrance to audience area, and they watched the live broadcast stream that was projected in the air. I asked Xenovia who was nearby

“How is the game going!?”

“Ise! Look quickly! It’s really intense!”

There was a separate display for each scene, but in one of the screens, the battle between Koneko-chan and Kuroka was nearing its climax! Koneko-chan in her Shirone mode released white-flamed Kasha at Kuroka, while Kuroka skillfully used her various Youkai,

demonic, and senjutsu techniques to easily negate all of Koneko-chan's attacks. Seeing this, Koneko-chan began to use physical techniques in tandem as she approached Kuroka, and then began an assault of punches and kicks at a close range with her touki-coated body. Koneko-chan's wild onslaught didn't give Kuroka any time to rest, and Koneko-chan's physical prowess was already far beyond her sister's. Kuroka used a small-scale transportation technique on herself to try and increase the distance between herself and Koneko-chan, but Koneko-chan had already foreseen that her sister would use this technique, so she predicted the spot at which her sister would appear, and immediately rushed towards it. She once again engaged in close-quarters physical combat with her sister, and her sister was finally injured. Because they normally lived together all the time and did various things together, it was only natural that she had become able to understand how her sister would think and act. Kuroka looked at the figure of the younger sister who had caught up with her — and smiled. With a smile of pleasure on her face, Kuroka said

[Shirone! The winner — can take the lead in getting the first night with our future husband, Ise! This is a battle between sisters for the first night!]

[—!]

Koneko-chan was surprised! I was shocked as well! The battle between those two sisters has actually been bet on such an important thing! Koneko-chan immediately took it seriously and prepared her stance.

[……I understand. I accept that challenge!]

This provoked the commentator.

<<Umm! I don't quite understand…the sisters' first night…? That must be at stake in this battle! It seems this has become a battle to decide who will get the first night with the Oppai Dragon…you truly make me envious, Oppai Dragon!>>

Uh, since I was near the audience area, it was unlikely that many people would notice me, but I was still really embarrassed by that! This is going to get published in the newspapers, and the media will be gossiping about it as well! The showdown between Koneko-chan and Kuroka intensified further, and at that time, jii-chan spoke to me from the jewel of my Sacred Gear again.

[Alright, Ise. —It's almost time for me to say goodbye to you.]

—What! Such a sudden parting. No, jii-chan already died long ago, even though I had spoken to him through the Ungaikyo recently!

"Jii-chan!? W-Why!? You're just going to enter my Sacred Gear without permission, and leave like that as well?"

[I would feel bad for Ddraig if I just continued to stay in the jewel forever. I can't continue to stay in this world either and spy on the erotic scenes of my grandson and those young ladies. Don't you agree?]

"T-That's true, it would certainly be quite embarrassing."

Ddraig would feel worn out, and I wouldn't want jii-chan to see all of the ero stuff that I get up to with the girls! Jii-chan continued

[You belong to the Devils of the Bible, and I must return to the Paradise of Buddhism. Our mythologies don't align. There may be no further chance for us to meet each other again.]

After listening to jii-chan's lonely words, I said

"…We'll meet again. There's that mirror, even though we can't use it too many times."

After using the Ungaikyo once, it would take a long time to see that same person the next time. In most cases, each person was limited to a single time.

"I'm able to live for a long time right now, so I might have the opportunity to use the Ungaikyo again…I will make my name even more renowned in Paradise, so that the gods on that side will invite me to visit!"

Jii-chan — although I couldn't see his face, I'm sure he was extremely satisfied. Jii-chan left some final words behind for me

[Ise! A harem! You must realise your harem! When you meet a cute girl, propose to her! If you get proposed to by a cute girl, you must not hesitate to accept her!]

Jii-chan finally cried out.

[My grandson — is the best Oppai Dragon!]

And my conversation with jii-chan was then cut off there—. …He went into the jewel on his own, and helped me to develop new techniques without asking…. …Jii-chan, thank you. Although it was quite a mess, it's all thanks to you that I was able to protect Koneko-chan and Kuroka—. Although jii-chan's departure was quite sudden, the match unfolding before my eyes was becoming more and more heated—. Both Koneko-chan and Kuroka were rather worn out. Koneko-chan breathed heavily as she said

[Kuroka-neesama, let's finish this!]

[Yeah, come at me with your best!]

Using demonic energy attacks, black-flamed Kasha, kicks and punches combined with senjutsu and touki, Kuroka mercilessly attacked her little sister with everything that she had to offer. Koneko-chan released kasha — and then released her Shirone mode and reverted to her normal form as she continued to surround her body with touki! And then, it happened! Koneko-chan's tail — turned into three! A tremendous amount of touki enveloped Koneko-chan! Even right now, Kuroka was only capable of manifesting two tails! At this critical moment, Koneko-chan had evolved to have three tails. Koneko-chan's eyes shone with a golden light! Koneko-chan's movements accelerated to a point where it was difficult to even keep up with the naked eye, and she far exceeded Kuroka's ability to follow! It was difficult even for me to see clearly! The fast-moving kasha that Kuroka released was no longer able to catch up to Koneko-chan's ultra-high-speed movements—. Eventually, Koneko-chan's speed increased to a point where even her footsteps became silent as she charged towards Kuroka's body. By the time that Kuroka even noticed, Koneko-chan's fist had already plummeted into her abdomen. *Pow*! —That clear, resounding noise echoed out from between the two sisters. After a moment, Kuroka's body wavered. As her body trembled, Kuroka lovingly hugged Koneko-chan.

[…It seems there's a big difference in terms of physical ability. You've become stronger, Shirone…]

Kuroka's body was enveloped in the light of retirement. Kuroka stroked Koneko-chan's cheeks.

[It looks like you'll be just fine without me. You're already so strong…]

Holding onto her sister's hand as she was about to disappear, Koneko-chan let out large tears.

[…No, even if I become stronger, I'll still need Kuroka-neesama. — Because we're sisters.]

Kuroka — faded into the light.

<<Of the [Hakuryuukou of the Morning Star] team, one [Bishop] has retired.>>

An announcement to affirm Koneko-chan's victory was broadcast across the field—.

Koneko-chan had attained victory for herself, but the game was not over yet. On another screen, His Eminence Vasco Strada was still fighting against Arthur. Both of the swordsmen were wielding holy swords which were enveloped in a holy aura—. Every time their blades clashed, waves of holy aura were released, causing destruction to the entirety of the surrounding area. The road upon which the two of them were standing was on the verge of collapse, and all of the nearby buildings had collapsed. The last time — in the battle during which the Church warriors started a rebellion, Arthur ended their battle prematurely due to the difference in their physical strength…. This time, His Eminence Strada had reverted to the days of his fifties — the movements of His Emience at his prime were very smooth, and his untiring and fierce attacks continued to move towards Arthur. Arthur used Collbrande to block the attacks, but he was forced to kneel down every time he blocked an attack. Although he did his best to stand back up and escape from a bad situation, he still continued to be overwhelmed underneath His Eminence's frightening power. Arthur used his holy sword to pierce a hole in the space, and then put his blade into it. It was an ultimate technique that was used at close-range and allowed the tip of his blade to pierce through close to his opponent, but His Eminence was still able to dodge and negate it. Even in the body of a relatively old man, he

was still able to dodge them all! Arthur had also become considerably stronger since that battle as well! Arthur continually used spatial portals to attack from blind spots, but that monster still — His Eminence Strada was still able to dodge! Just as Arthur pierced through space, the aura of his holy sword was released for an attack at the same time, but His Eminence maintained his distance and evaded each blow one after the other. …If it was me, then I wouldn't have known about the timing of his attacks, and I would've been hit! Just like last time, Arthur tried to avoid direct clashes of their blades as much as possible. It was already made clear to him that he was unable to match the strength of His Eminence at his prime. Although Arthur intended to evade, His Eminence didn't allow him to do so by approaching and beginning a close-quarters fight. Even in the close-range fight between the two of them, Arthur's talent in swordsmanship could be seen, but His Emience was overpowering and forcing Arthur back with every swing of Durandal—. Amidst the fierce clash of blades, Arthur suddenly jumped back and pulled away. His Eminence said

[You are indeed an excellent swordsman. I can't help but admire the fact that you're a rare talent. —But, there are a few technical immaturities that can be seen from time to time.]

Arthur didn't speak, and simply continued to breathe heavily. It seemed like Arthur would be the first to run out of stamina this time. His Eminence continued

[After relying only on your own talents over the countless battlefields that you've traversed, your technique has been tainted by a slight sense of vanity. —Although there are a few effective techniques, it is impossible to break my Durandal.]

Arthur smiled with irony.

[…When you say that, I have nothing to say in return.]

However, Arthur still didn't give up, and he channeled holy aura into his blade again! He let loose a holy wave from afar! Collbrande's holy aura shone with a dazzling radiance and had an immense size! —But, the only action that His Eminence Strada took was to tense his left arm, causing his enormous muscles to swell even more. Collbrande's holy aura rapidly approached, and in contrast, His Eminence thrust out his fist to unleash aura from it! The holy aura released by Collbrande collided with the holy aura released by his fist — and was scattered by the power of the Holy Fist! The momentum of the Holy Fist didn't stop with that, and ran straight through the tall building that stood behind! The announcer roared

<<It's appeeeaaarrreeed! Holy Fist! The origin of the Holy Fist that the reincarnated Angel, Captain Angel Nero Raimondi-senshu used!>>

The commentator was also stunned.

<<…The power is greater by several orders of magnitude. To think that there exists a fist capable of easily taking down an entire building…!>>

When His Eminence Strada came to Kuoh Town, Xenovia, Irina and I had asked His Eminence. *How can we become that strong? What do we need to do to enshroud our fists with holy aura?* His Eminence clenched his fist as he spoke to us

[Listen closely, children. Even before I became a teenager, I vowed in my heart that I would become a warrior of the Church. I kept praying, I kept thinking, and I kept on training day after day without interruption. O Lord. Please grant this fist of mine divine mercy.

Endure, endure, endure, endure…there was not a day of slack as I continued to train for many hours every single day. Even when I went into seclusion, I didn't neglect anything at all.]

His Eminence gripped the cross hanging in front of his chest as he continued

[When you acquire the spirit to believe that a miracle will occur without doubt, when you have an unshakable and just heart, and a persistently trained body, that is when your fist will be filled with mercy.]

His Eminence's power was not caused by a miracle; rather, his power caused a miracle. That was what I understood in that moment. Arthur's face was covered in sweat, and his chest heaved with every rough breath as he said

[Perhaps I'll lose…but even so, please allow me to fight until the final moment. I will hold on as a miracle could be born in an instant, and that is because I am a man who fights alongside the Hakuryuukou.]

His Eminence showed a fearless smile as he accepted Arthur's invitation—.

[Yes, that is correct. Resignation is what kills a warrior[4].]

His Eminence maintained the upper hand as they continued to fight. On another side, Kiba and Bikou were still fighting. Bikou had made clones of himself, while Kiba created Dragon Knights to counter them. The clones and the Dragon Knights clashed with each other, while the two real people confronted each other as well. Kiba wielded Gram and Bikou wielded his Ruyi Bang as they exchanged blows with a speed that was so fast that it was not visible to the

naked eye. After Kiba underwent rigorous training with His Eminence, the way that he used the demonic sword Gram in a close-range fight had changed; he released a vast amount of aura in the instant of the sword's impact in order to compensate for his lack of power. That was why Bikou — was being pressured by Kiba's continuous slashes right now! Bikou pulled away and extended his Ruyi Bang from a distance to attack, but Kiba moved like a streak of light and instantly ran behind Bikou, and then swung his demonic sword down! He occasionally used his sandanzuki, which far exceeded Bikou's ability to evade! Eventually, Bikou's Ruyi Bang was cut apart!

[My rod!? Damn it!]

However, Bikou reached into his ear with his fingers and took out a second Ruyi Bang. After Kiba took a deep breath, he repositioned his stance and allowed the Dragon Knights to disappear. A countless number of holy-demonic swords then sprang up from the ground in that area! Bikou was forced to dodge, but Kiba instantly shrunk their distance and swung Gram down whilst it was coated in the aura of a holy-demonic sword! At the moment of impact, a tremendous power was unleashed, and Bikou could do nothing but endure! Bikou shouted

[Tsk! How did a guy like you learn to use such power!?]

Kiba fearlessly laughed.

[After all, His Eminence's training was extraordinary. In order to train for strength and stamina, it's necessary to change one's diet and daily life! Thanks to all of that, I'm able to deliver a better power output at the moment of my sword's impact!]

Just as Kiba said, by using this method, the power of his strikes were only amplified at the moment of impact. This was a very suitable skill for Kiba who had an emphasis on technique. He would normally make use of his technique, but when it came down to the finishing blow, he could then use power—. …With His Eminence's guidance, my friend and rival had evolved beyond what I had expected! It looked as though the battle between His Eminence and Arthur, as well as the battle between Bikou and Kiba would continue for a while! In another place — there was an incredible change. In the park, purple flames incessantly burned, and a giant Angel gradually grew in size! Is that…Lint-san's Balance Breaker!? As thunder loudly roared, Akeno-san unleashed her enormous Holy Lightning Dragons down towards the park that was below her! Le Fay used sturdy defensive magic circles to resist! The battles occurring in the park were also very intense! And in another place, Vali was fighting against Crom Cruach, and the battle between those two had caused immense destruction to the field. It was the first time that I had seen Vali's Maouification, but…the quality of his aura was beyond belief! A mere blast of his demonic energy was sufficient enough to blow everything in its path away! All of the buildings surrounding them had already vanished, and their battlefield had become a vast open plain! Vali's Maouification seems like it's even stronger than my Dragon Deification!?

[Although there are aspects where you wouldn't be inferior to Vali, Vali seems to be stronger overall.]

—Ddraig said. Moreover, Crom's attacks were also extremely ferocious! Relying only on physical attacks and a dragon's flames and aura, he was able to generate a tremendous impact on the field. Vali had no choice but to endure Crom's violent assault. As their battle intensified even further, I had to wonder whether they would be able

to decide a winner first, or if the field would collapse first as a result of the destruction caused by the battle of the two dragons—. But, the outlook of the game had shifted in a different place. The announcer shouted again

<<What! Rias-senshu covered her body in Gasper-senshu's power…but that dark shroud is gradually peeling away!>>

Looking over, the black thing fighting against the giant Fenrir is…Rias? Only now did I realise that that thing was actually Rias! What happened!? Although it had an aura of darkness, it was also enveloped in the red aura of destruction at the same time, and that's why I was able to recognise that it was Rias. The third eye on her forehead — could that possibly be Gasper?

"She moulded Gasper…Balor onto her own body!"

Upon hearing my remark, Asia replied

"Yes, apparently it's Rias-oneesama's new technique…it also looks like she's reaching her time limit."

Rias, who had turned into a black beast panted heavily. A black aura was continually leaking from her body, and it was quite obvious that her strength was constantly weakening. The giant Fenrir's body had also been covered in injuries as a result of its fight against Rias, and blood had soaked its fur, but it was still intent on fighting. Xenovia bitterly said

"Damage can be healed by Valerie's Sacred Gear…"

Irina then said

"But it cannot replenish stamina. It'll be dangerous if Rias-san's stamina runs out."

Rias descended onto the rooftop of a building that had yet to collapse, and she tried to gather demonic energy into her hands. In the distant sky, something was flying over—. Taking a closer look, it appeared to be a golem, it was Gogmagog! The ancient golem was firing its engine as it flew towards Rias at high speed! The commentator explained

<<Oooooohh! Gogmagog-senshu was wrecked in the early stages of the game, but it is re-joining the fight now! The ancient weapon has the ability to repair itself, and that's why it is able to catch up at such a critical point in the game!>>

Gogmagog fired off laser beams towards Rias. Rias planned to use the demonic energy in her hands to retaliate—. But Fenrir howled and then bit off a nearby iron pipe and tossed it out. The iron pipe pierced the wall of a large building that was nearby. I don't know what the purpose of that was — but Gogmagog released a powerful laser beam into building where that iron pipe had been stabbed! Suddenly, Gasper's scream echoed out!

<<Valerie!>>

The beam mercilessly drilled out an enormous hole in the building! The next instant, an announcement from the referee was broadcast.

<<Of the [Rias Gremory] team, one [Bishop] has retired.>>

—That was the announcement of Valerie's retirement. I see, Rias hid Valerie in one of the large buildings in case of an emergency. But Fenrir noticed that, and it was able to communicate that to Gogmagog. The teamwork between that golem and wolf was surprisingly good! The outstanding silent cooperation between the

monster and weapon of the Vali team left us all surprised! The announcer yelled

<<A vicious ray of light! After making it this far into the game, Valerie Tepes-senshu has retired! The team of Rias Gremory has now lost its means of recovery!>>

After defeating Valerie, Gogmagog flew through the air and then aimed at Rias. Fenrir also followed closely and kept its eyes glued to Rias. It seemed as though both of them still had the capacity to fight. I couldn't help but feel worried upon witnessing this scene.

"No matter how strong Rias is right now, facing both Fenrir and Gogmagog at the same time is—"

If this goes one, she'll lose — just as I thought that, someone jumped between the buildings and arrived at Rias' side.

[Princess! I've come to help!]

—It was His Eminence Vasco Strada! Not only me, but the entire venue began to brim with excitement!

<<He's finally coomeeee! Vasco Strada-senshu has made it!>>

Such a development actually occurred! His Eminence had arrived just when Rias was in a pinch! Uwah, even I can't help but feel emotional when an old swordsman arrives when my girlfriend is in a pinch!

"Was there an announcement about Arthur's retirement!?"

I asked. The fact that His Eminence was able to rush over to this side meant that a winner must have been decided, but—

"No, I don't think he's retired—"

Following this, Xenovia looked over to the screen which Arthur was on. Arthur had collapsed on the road, and it seemed as though he was unable to get up. His stamina had already been completely exhausted. It looked like he couldn't even move a finger anymore. Arthur had actually become physically exhausted. His Eminence descended onto the rooftop of a skyscraper in order to protect Rias. He looked at Fenrir and Gogmagog as he said

[The wolf or the golem. Or is it both?]

His Eminence raised the holy sword in his hand—. But the aura of darkness — Gasper separated from Rias' body. From that dark form, Rias returned to her usual form…and Rias instantly collapsed onto the rooftop. Her breathing was greatly perturbed, and it looked like she was unable to stand up as well. The dark Gasper said

<<Rias-oneesama…our [King] has already reached her limits. I think you should announce your retirement.>>

Gasper proposed that they surrender. In response to this, Rias tried to protest. The colour of her face…also looked pretty bad.

[…Gasper, what are you saying…]

The dark Gasper shook his head.

<<This technique…it will be dangerous to continue using it. Taking into account the future of this Tournament, everything will have been for naught if you don't retire now…. Please, Rias-oneesama, any more is…>>

Gasper pleaded. Rias was currently in a very dangerous situation, and that was clear to everyone who was watching.

[……Kuh…]

Rias let out a regretful moan. After gasping and breathing roughly for around ten seconds—

[…I surrender.]

Rias — surrendered, and declared her own defeat. The announcer cried out

<<What what whaaaaaat!!!! Rias-senshu has chosen to declare her own retirement!!!!!>>

A broadcast of the referee's voice was also immediately heard

<<Rias Gremory-senshu's declaration of surrender is accepted. The game is over! The winner is the [Hakuryuukou of the Morning Star] team!>>

—Hmm. …We were also lost for words. Xenovia and the others closed their eyes quietly. …Arthur had been beaten to a point where he was no longer capable of movement, Kuroka had been defeated, Bikou was heavily pressured, Gogmagog had been broken once, and the true Fenrir had suffered so much damage…. What an incredible match. The team lead by the one known as the most powerful Hakuryuukou had been hit so hard. I — clapped! My comrades also followed suit and applauded. This spread throughout the audience seating area, and the entire venue was soon flooded in applause. The audience gave them a standing ovation! On the display, both Vali and Crom were completely battered, and their battle had come to an abrupt end. With his armour damaged in various places, Vali's chest heaved in great motions as he said

[…To think that it ended like this. I guess this is a so-called game.]

Crom wiped the blood flowing down from his forehead as he said

[Hmph, there are a few things that are still quite unresolved, but it's also true that I haven't been able to enjoy something like this for a long time. Don't worry, the Tournament still has a long way to go. Will you be able to win if we meet again?]

[Yeah, that's right. That is the principle of this Tournament. Even if this Tournament is not enough, there's always the next one. And besides, if you just want to spar, then there will surely be a chance.]

Crom excitedly laughed in response to this.

[Fuhahahaha! This is such a good era! I can actually fight openly against you, the Sekiryuutei, other dragons, and even with gods. When this first began, I thought it was a mere joke…but to people like you and I who look forward to such battles, there couldn't any better Tournament than this. …Though the rules are a bit of a nuisance.]

Vali shrugged.

[Well, it's just a matter of getting into the habit.]

Vali approached Crom and extended his hand out for a handshake — Crom smiled as he brushed Vali's hand aside and flew over to Rias. Vali looked at his rejected handshake attempt and cheerfully laughed by himself—.

Part 4

After the game ended, we went to visit the medical office. Rias had been carried there due to her poor physical condition. Rias returned to the medical room after her medical examination was complete. The report stated that it was an after effect of enduring Gasper's

Balor power. As a result, all of her stamina and demonic energy had been depleted, and that's why she collapsed. Lying in her bed, Rias pouted.

"…My loss was seen by Ise and the others…"

I held Rias' hand.

"It's okay, although it was a combined technique with Gasper, it's incredible that you were able to have such a fierce battle against Fenrir until the very end."

Those were my heartfelt words. In order to fight against Fenrir last year, we invested a considerable amount of effort. With this in mind, Rias' new technique was phenomenal. Though in that regard, the gigantic Fenrir was probably only at eighty percent of its original strength. Incidentally, Kuroka and Valerie who had retired earlier were lying on the neighbouring beds. Valerie didn't have any obvious external injuries because she was taken out in a single shot, but she was resting just to be on the safe side. Kuroka had been fighting against Koneko-chan, and it would have been better if she slept peacefully in order to restore her physical strength as soon as possible, but—. She was currently hanging on my back, and playfully flirting with me.

"Even I've become one of your wife candidates now nyan ♪ Ise Ise, afterwards, let's find a place for our wedding ceremony nya."

Koneko-chan left Kuroka's side and walked towards Rias.

"Rias-neesama. There's something that I've decided on."

With a determined expression, Koneko-chan faced her master, and at the same time, she also spoke to Rias as if she were her sister

“—I plan to change my name back to how it was back then…to [Shirone].”

[—!]

Let alone me, everyone else who was present was extremely shocked by this! Even Kuroka was surprised by this sudden proclamation. Rias was the only person who calmly accepted this, and she raised the upper half of her body in bed as she said

“I see, so you finally made up your mind.”

Koneko-chan quietly asked

“I plan to use [Shirone] as my real name, and [Koneko] as another name. Do you agree, Rias-neesama?”

With a gentle expression, Rias replied

“There’s no need to ask for my agreement. As long as that’s what you want, then it’s fine. It’s best for you. —Shirone.”

Rias pulled Koneko-chan closer as she embraced her. Koneko-chan revealed a joyful smile whilst she was buried in Rias’ bosom.

“Thank you, Rias-neesama.”

Koneko-chan continued

“But, I won’t throw aside the name that I received from you either, Rias-neesama. So that’s why my name will be [Toujou Shirone] from now on.”

Toujou Shirone—. It’s a good name. At that time, Kuroka raised her hand

“Then, can I imitate that and go by the name of [Toujou Kuroka] from now on? I should also have a surname nyan.”

Rias smiled as she said

“Yes yes, as you wish.”

However, Kuroka stuck out her tongue as she said

“But, [Hyoudou Kuroka] sounds fine too nya ♪.”

Koneko-chan — no, Shirone-chan turned to thank Ravel this time.

“—Thank you, Ravel. For protecting our game.”

“It’s okay. In fact, I feel proud to have been able to help you. Kone…Shirone-san.”

Shirone-chan held her friend’s hand.

“Just Shirone is fine. We’re friends after all.”

“—Mmm. …Got it, Shirone.”

I also asked Shirone-chan

“Would it be better if I also called you Shirone-chan?”

“I don’t mind if you call me Koneko-chan just like usual, Ise-senpai. Koneko is also my name. But—”

She spoke in a somewhat shy manner

“…In public, and in ceremonies, please call me by my real name Shirone…”

“I understand. You’re Shirone-chan and Koneko-chan!”

She's Shirone-chan and Koneko-chan! She's Koneko-chan and Shirone-chan! I might occasionally make a mistake, but no matter which one it is, she's still the same Koneko-chan and Shirone-chan. Although Rias' team had been defeated, they had still gained a sense of fulfilment from somewhere. His Eminence Strada had also returned to his original age, and was cheerfully drinking a bottle of sports drink in a corner of the medical room. Lint-san was also quite exhausted, and she was currently sleeping on an empty bed. By the way, after the incident was over, Ikuse-san's team rushed over to various places to report and explain the situation. They were just as busy as usual. And then, Ravel suddenly said

"Ise-sama, fighting in order to protect someone. …Even though I've been watching your battles so closely, I still forgot something so important, Ise-sama…. After fighting in order to protect Shirone and Kuroka-sama, it feels as though the important thing in my heart that I forgot about has been reawakened."

In response to this, Bina-shi said

"Ravel-san, I believe this is a battle that would be categorised with [Kingship]. This is the glorious path that our [King] walks upon—. Since you stand by the Oppai Dragon — Hyoudou Issei-san's side, you mustn't forget this."

Feeling deeply touched by what Bina-shi said, Ravel nodded with an emotional expression.

"…Bina-sama…. Yes!"

The battle with the Grim Reapers had occurred behind the scenes of the game, and it seemed as though Ravel had made great progress because of that. —Just as I showed a satisfied smile at the growth of

my two juniors Koneko-chan and Ravel, Koneko-chan suddenly stood in front of me.

“Ise-senpai, please bend down a little bit.”

I did as Koneko-chan said and crouched down. My eyes became level with hers.

“Like this, so now—”

Koneko-chan’s lips touched my lips—. It was a kiss — from her. The sensation of her lips were so tender, Koneko-chan…Shirone-chan’s face was dyed the brightest shade of red.

“My first kiss.”

Kuroka cried out!

“Ah — that’s sneaky nyan!”

Kuroka pulled my face over and forcefully kissed me! She even pushed her tongue in as well, but as a result, Shirone-chan pulled me away from Kuroka and shouted!

“Kuroka-neesama is too aggressive!”

After saying that, Shirone-chan kissed me again! Kuroka then pulled me back over and stole my lips! Asia and the others then rushed over!

“You can’t keep kissing Ise-san!”

Irina and Xenovia also protested!

“Yeah! That’s already more times than me and darling!”

“In that case, we can increase the number of our kisses with Ise right here!”

I was pulled around back and forth between the five people! Rias also looked at all of us and got caught up in the situation.

“If Ise and I kiss, I might be able to recover a little sooner.”

After saying so, even Akeno-san—

“Ara ara, I think I’ll also participate later.”

There were another pair who were also eager to kiss! I’m very happy, but my body can’t endure! There are seven people, seven! Although I’m extremely happy, I only have one body! All of a sudden, the words that jii-chan spoke reverberated in my mind.

—Ise! A harem! You must realise your harem! When you meet a cute girl, propose to her! If you get proposed to by a cute girl, you must not hesitate to accept her!

Dear jii-chan in Paradise—. I will try my best to become a Harem King, so please stay there and watch over meeee!

[1] Kannon Bodhisvatta is also known as ‘Guanyin’, the Goddess of Mercy in Buddhism.
[2] Alternate reading is ‘Super Breast Wave Cannon’. The ‘nyuu’ in Nyuutron is a way of pronouncing ‘breasts’ in Japanese.
[3] Alternate reading is ‘Breast Telephone’.
[4] Alternate reading is ‘man’.

Part 1

A few days had passed since the battle between Rias' team and Vali's team, as well as the battle against Thanatos' group—. All members of our [Sekiryuutei of Blazing Truth] team gathered in the VIP room of the Hyoudou residence prior to our game against the [Leisure of the Kings] team. It was because we were receiving an important guest. —It was the current governor of the Grigori, Shemhazai-san. Azazel-sensei had handed over certain items to Shemhazai-san before he went into the Isolation Barrier Field, and Shemhazai-san had brought those items over to us this today! Shemhazai-san created a Fallen Angels' transportation magic circle on the table, and then took out several briefcases from it.

"It took a lot of time to collect these things, and these are the results of Sirzechs Lucifer-sama, Michael-sama and Azazel's back and forth travels between the various factions."

Shemhazai-san opened the first briefcase. —A single longsword was kept inside it. It was a holy sword that quietly released a holy aura. However, it didn't have the chill of a normal holy sword that only Devils would usually feel. Rather, that aura…it felt very familiar to me! When I moved my eyes to my left arm, Shemhazai-san smiled.

"Yes, this sword is the newest holy sword that has been crafted through various techniques by the Three Factions after peace was achieved — Ascalon II."

—Ascalon II!? The second generation of Ascalon! To think that something like this had been prepared…. The holy sword that His Eminence Strada wielded was Durandal II, and I couldn't help but feel that the alchemists of the Church had somehow greatly improved their skills after learning various techniques from the other factions! It must have set off quite a technological revolution…. Shemhazai-san gave an explanation to me as he took Ascalon II out

"It's not so much a holy sword, rather, it's more like a sword that is perfectly matched to the aura of a dragon…it could be described as a sword designed just for you, Hyoudou Issei-kun. This sword is even more suited to your aura than the original Ascalon."

I received Ascalon II…. Hmm, it somehow does feel really familiar in my hand! It feels even more natural than the first-generation Ascalon that's been assimilated into my left hand. It had almost instantly synchronised with my aura. Ddraig said

[Partner, let's keep it in your empty right arm.]

After all, my left arm already had one. But even so, to give me a sword even when I've got absolutely no talent for swords…. I guess it's best if I keep it in my gauntlet like the first-generation one, and use it in a close-quarters melee battle when the time is right. The armoured gauntlet of the Boosted Gear Scale Mail appeared on my right hand, and I held Ascalon II with it. With Ddraig's assistance, I focused — and a red flash was emitted. After the light faded, Ascalon II disappeared from my hand. I clenched my fist — and just like the first-generation Ascalon, the holy blade extended out from my gauntlet. Whilst practicing the action a few times, I said to Shemhazai-san

“I don’t feel like I can become proficient in dual-wielding swords like Kiba, Xenovia and the others.”

Even though I now had a holy sword in both my left and right gauntlets, and I could use both of them at the same time, I didn’t feel that I would be able to wield two holy swords dexterously. Shemhazai-san replied

“But, if you have a holy sword stored in each arm, you may be able to respond well to an unexpected situation. For example, if you left hand is somehow constricted.”

That made sense. As the saying goes, you can never be too prepared. Shemhazai-san then opened up the next briefcase. There was an old-looking wand inside it. Going only by the appearance, it looked rather powerful…. Upon seeing the wand, Rossweisse-san let out a breath of disbelief. She ran up the briefcase and stared at the wand. Shemhazai-san took the wand out and handed it over to Rossweisse-san.

“This is a Mistilteinn wand.”

“I-It really is that one! I’ve seen it back in my hometown!”

Seeing my apparent puzzlement, Ravel explained

“The Mistilteinn wand is a magical weapon which possesses powerful magic in Asgard.”

A magic weapon of Asgard! It also possesses immense magic, so it could be described as a weapon that has been tailor-made for Rossweisse-san. Shemhazai-san said

“During the Evil Dragon War, it was said that a new Mistilteinn wand would be created for [DxD], and it was finally completed after

the war. Although it couldn't be made in time for that battle…it will be able to assist with Rossweisse-san's magic output now."

As for the person in question, Rossweisse-san was holding the Mistilteinn wand rather timidly.

"…If it's just a matter of assistance, isn't this more than enough? …Isn't this a weapon that only god-class beings possess…?"

I-It's actually such an awesome weapon!? A god-class being's weapon…. It is certainly true that a lot of incredible things occurred in succession during the Evil Dragon War, so the Norse mythology couldn't help but produce such a weapon in order to deal with the situation at hand. Shemhazai-san then opened the third briefcase…a scabbard lay inside it. …I could feel a holy aura emanating from it. Could this be the scabbard of a holy sword? Although it was my first time seeing it, it somehow felt familiar, and the way that it was decorated…. Wait, this aura, I've felt this before! Everyone looked carefully at the scabbard, and aside from me—

"…Eh? Really?"

"…No way, it shouldn't be possible…"

"…But, judging by the aura, it can only be…"

Irina, Xenovia and Rossweisse-san all showed expressions of surprise, and they seemed to be doubting their own eyes. Shemhazai-san quietly laughed after watching everyone's reactions.

"Fufufu, we've constantly had our eyes on it. Correct, this is an item for Xenovia Quarta-san. —Excalibur's scabbard."

[It really is! Amazing!]

Everyone aside from me exclaimed in surprise after hearing what Shemhazai-san said.

"…Is Excalibur's scabbard supposed to be amazing?"

Upon hearing my innocuous question, Ravel brought her face closer as she answered me with a tone of excitement

"I-Ise-sama! When people talk about Excalibur's scabbard, this is the scabbard of Excalibur that they refer to!"

Even Irina's voice and entire body trembled as she said

"Ise-kun! This scabbard is an unbelievable item! It's amazing! I never imagined that it would be found at a time like this…!"

"It'd be no exaggeration to say that this is the main component of Excalibur."

"The legendary scabbard has been lost for a long time…but it's actually been found now…!"

Shemhazai-san answered to Ravel's words

"In order to recover the scabbard, we searched in many places, and we finally found out that the scabbard had been sealed away in an underground ruin where different religions once fought against each other. If we weren't in our present era where the gods of each mythology have made peace with each other, then it wouldn't have been possible for us to send investigation teams to that place."

…It seemed like the process to retrieve the scabbard was rather complicated. If the various factions hadn't achieved peace, this might never have seen the light of day again…. Through the culmination of

many factors, it was a treasure that had finally been brought to us. Xenovia took a deep breath as she picked up the scabbard.

"…With this scabbard, I'll even be able to go up against god-class beings."

Upon hearing Xenovia say this, Irina giggled.

"This isn't the kind of thing that a devout believer should be saying."

Xenovia shrugged.

"The gods that we'll be fighting against and the god that we believe in are not the same."

Her explanation was akin to saying that there existed another stomach just for desserts! W-Well, it's fine I guess. Xenovia and Irina have always been like that. They're strange in that way. It's true that the gods participating in the Tournament are different from the god that they believe in, so I'll let that slide. Because so many pieces of equipment had been prepared for us, I couldn't help but ask

"Is it really okay for you to prepare all of these items for us? There are obviously still a lot of other teams participating in the Tournament."

It was a bit late for us to say this after having come so far with a Longinus and legendary holy swords, but it felt a bit unfair to have all of these legendary items given to us. Shemhazai-san answered with a smile

"They all have their own organisations and mythologies to support them, and we've already achieved peace anyway. However, our side also has the [DxD] team for anti-terrorism measures, and we've

already been focusing on strengthening our combat force since before the Tournament. These tools are for you to use, but they're also part of the fighting force of the anti-terrorist team. As a result, it also has serves the purpose of preventing terrorism from occurring when the outside world sees it. Although some factions may have criticisms about this…there are gods everywhere who don't wish for a large-scale war like the Evil Dragon War again."

So it also has significance in that way huh…. Well, Cao Cao also receives protection from Śakra, while Dulio and the others have the backing of Heaven. If everyone thought too much about these things, then it would be difficult to actually participate. Ravel expressed her thanks to Shemhazai-san

"Governor Shemhazai, thank you very much for bringing us all of these items. We'll make good use of them, regardless if it's as [DxD], or for our team in the Tournament."

[Thank you.]

All of us expressed our gratitude to Shemhazai-san once again. Shemhazai-san answered us with

"You're welcome."

At that moment, someone knocked on the door.

"Excuse me."

The person who came in was — Kiba. He had a serious expression. When Kiba asked us

"Are you finished?"

I responded with

“Almost.”

Kiba then bluntly said

“Things aren’t going well. —One of the top candidates, the god-class Mahabali team is at a disadvantage.”

After listening to this news, we all looked at each other.

The place that we arrived at via a transportation magic circle was [Azazel Stadium] in the Fallen Angels’ territory — the prince of the Asura gods, Mahabali-san’s team was currently competing. I had previously fought here against Barakiel-san. Everyone who lived at the Hyoudou residence had come here, and we walked towards the spectator area. We spotted Vali in the corridor of the entrance. Vali stood by the entrance, and he watched the aerial projection of the live broadcast that was in the centre of the stadium. We also looked over at it. The situation on the field was currently being displayed. The field appeared to be the site of a ruin…and in the centre of the destroyed remnants, the Prince of the Asuras, Mahabali-san was kneeling on the ground. His body was covered in wounds, and he was gasping for his breath.

<<This is difficult to believe! As one of the candidates tipped to win, Mahabali-senshu is actually kneeling on the ground right now! The ones who have forced him into such a state — are the mysterious players who have suddenly joined an ordinary team!>>

The announcer also seemed to have become excited by the scene before his eyes as he said that. Mahabali-san was looking at — two people. One of them was a woman. To be more precise, she seemed to be a girl who was of similar age to us judging by her appearance. She had long jade-coloured hair, and she seemed to have a cheerful

air about her. The other one was a man. He had copper-red hair that was swept all the way back. Not only did he have a tall stature, he also had a very strong physical build. There was no trace of emotion on his face, and he appeared rather cold. Based on his appearance, perhaps he was the same age as us, or maybe a bit older. Unlike the injured Mahabali-san, they were completely unharmed! Mahabali-san's team had many Asura gods. Even among the god-class beings who were participating, they were considered to be a top-class line-up. As I looked at the venue's scoreboard, I could see that all of the members of Mahabali-san's team had retired! The copper-haired youth picked up the flag that was beside Mahabali-san.

[Flag taken.]

It was a capture-the-flag style of game. Before we came here, I had confirmed that the game type this time was called Scramble Flag. The instant that the copper-haired youth picked up the flag, an announcement of victory was broadcast.

<<The winner — is the [Black Satan of Darkness Dragon King] team.>>

The victory of the mysterious girl and youth had been declared—. This was the first defeat that Mahabali-san had suffered in the Tournament to date.

After seeing this unexpected result, and after the match concluded, we didn't leave the venue. In order to understand the details of the situation, we walked towards the match official's area. Rias said to me

"I didn't plan on watching this game to begin with. I thought that it was certain to be Mahabali's victory. After all, his opponent was a

team that had been on a losing streak up until now. But ten minutes into the game, Yuuto told me to watch the game."

Rias had immediately understood that an anomaly had occurred in the game, and she called us over as well. It was possible that there would be people acquainted with Rias in the VIP spectator room, and so began to make our way over there. It was just when we found a staff member and were about to ask about which VIPs had come to this stadium. —Hmm! A sudden wave of inexplicable pressure hit us! I felt a heavy pressure within my chest for a moment! There was an eerie aura that I had never sensed before. All of us turned around to look across. —Appearing there was the young lady with jade-coloured hair and the young man with copper hair who had appeared just then in the game. From those two people…I could feel an aura that seemed abnormal and bottomless. Cold beads of sweat began to form on my experienced comrades' skin as they gulped in the face of this immediate pressure alongside me. They approached us. The girl with jade-coloured hair stepped lightly as she moved towards us, and she revealed an innocent smile.

"It's nice to meet you, [Welsh Dragon]-san, [Vanishing Dragon]-san, and all of you other strong people. —My name is Verrine [1]."

The girl who identified herself as Verrine pointed to the young man behind her.

"The one over there — he's called Balberith [2]."

…The youth directed his gaze towards us, and a fear that invaded both our minds and our bodies crept along…! What's going on with that guy's aura…! H-How is it possible to have such an endlessly deep, strong, and inexplicable aura…!? I thought that I was the only one who felt like this, so I glanced at Vali who stood beside me —

beads of sweat could be seen on his forehead as well! That Vali is actually feeling pressure from this man named Balberith! The battle maniac who would normally show a fearless smile and fight with joy no matter how strong his opponent was, was actually…! Upon seeing us like this, Verrine seemed to find it amusing, and she couldn't help but let out a laugh as she said rather naturally

"Ufufu ♪ Balberith and I—. We seem to be what you'd call [Super Devils]."

[—!?!?]

Everyone was shocked! This was a natural response! They suddenly called themselves Super Devils! However, combining the outcome of the game just then and the pressure that we could feel in front of ourselves, all of that emphasised the authenticity of her words! I had seen Rizevim and Sirzechs-sama when he got serious in the past. My comrades beside me had also witnessed Rizevim, and during the Demonic Beast Riot, they had also seen Ajuka Beelzebub-sama in battle. No one had any doubts about her declaration. Verrine said

"Do you find the name of our team strange? It's a name that came about after we gathered together, though the name is nothing but a decoration anyway."

She laughed innocently. The aura exuded by this relaxed and cheerful young girl also felt as though it was bottomless. The youth called Balberith emotionlessly said

"I fought against a god…it wasn't very much."

After getting halfway through his sentence, his piercing glare shifted to me and Vali!

“—Will the Two Heavenly Dragons considered to be the strongest in history be worthy of battle?”

It felt as though I was beginning to freeze from deep within. Even though I felt such fear, on the other hand, a strong person was seeking me out, and as a man, I couldn’t help but feel both happy and honoured…! In response, Vali finally revealed that fearless smile of his. Balberith walked past between the two of us.

“I look forward to meeting you in a match.”

Verrine quickly chased after the youth, and she waved goodbye to us as she left.

“See ya ♪”

After waiting until the two of them left, we finally exhaled and took a deep breath! Rias took a deep breath, and then she said

“…They’re truly monsters. It’s been a long time since I’ve felt as though I couldn’t breathe…!”

I asked Vali

“Vali, what do you think?”

Even though the two of them had already left, Vali still kept staring in the direction from which they had both left.

“…There is no doubt that they are Devils. But…it’s scary just how strong they are…!”

Albion and Ddraig also expressed their own thoughts.

[Those two…. What exactly is going on…?]

[So, such things have remained hidden up until now huh…]

This was the debut of the formidable people who had caused even the fearless Two Heavenly Dragons to say such things. Seriously, it doesn't look like it'll be that easy to advance in the Tournament. In the near future, we'll also have to compete against Vidar-san and the others! Faced with the extraordinary existences which were different to god-class beings, I was once again able to profoundly feel the true difficulty of this Tournament—.

Part 2

After encountering new enemies during our visit to Azazel Stadium, we began to collect information on the team of Balberith and Verrine. Rias and Ravel received some information from Tournament officials and other contestants. All of a sudden, Rossweisse-san received a message via a communications magic circle. After reading the contents, Rossweisse-san immediately shrieked, and she instantly sat down on the floor as the strength in her legs disappeared.

"……Eeeeeeeeeehhh…"

Her voice was filled with confusion.

"W-What's wrong, Rossweisse-san?"

I approached her, and after she jolted in surprise, she averted her eyes from me.

"……U-Umm…i-it's a bit difficult to say…"

After taking a deep breath, Rossweisse-san spoke with a determined expression.

“…My hometown sent a request to me, saying that a marriage interview has been arranged. My grandmother is strongly persuading…or more likely, forcing me to go to a marriage interview…”

A marriage interview!? Rossweisse-san is!? At the request of the Norse mythology!? I couldn’t help but feel taken aback. Irina continued to ask in my stead

“T-This marriage interview that you’re talking about, who is the other party…?”

It was at this time that Akeno-san spoke

“Ah, Rias. We’ve also been contacted by the Norse mythology. You can take a look.”

Akeno-san showed the communications magic circle to Rias, and she also understood after seeing it.

“…I-It looks like the situation has become troublesome!”

Rias’ expression seemed to show that she was uncertain of what to do as well. At last, Rossweisse-san said to me

“…T-The other party is Vidar-sama…!”

After a slow pause, all of us cried out loud!

[With the chief god!? A m-marriage interview!?]

From the looks of things, it seems like the final episode of the first trimester of our third year is yet another outrageous event!

[1] Known as the demon of impatience in Christian demonology.
[2] The demon who tempts men to blasphemy and murder. Both he and Verrine are associated with the Aix-En-Provence Possessions.

ARTIFICIAL TRANSCENDENTAL

In the lowest level of the Netherworld — there was a research institute that belonged to Rizevim Livan Lucifer in Cocytus, and the god of the Netherworld, Hades, had added more facilities to the underground location. Digging even deeper than Cocytus…a large research facility had been built at the very bottom of the lowest level of the Netherworld. Hades and the Grim Reapers who served as guards around him used the mother of Devils — Lilith to continue experimenting. In the centre of the large space that this research laboratory comprised, a large culture tank had been set up, and a piece of flesh was placed within it — Lilith. The culture tank had been transported here from Rizevim's research institute. A countless number of culture tanks had been set up all around this incessantly large research laboratory. Of course, they weren't as large as the one that housed Lilith, but of a regular size. Inside the normal-sized culture tanks were organisms that were nearly indistinguishable from humans. There were humanoid creatures with the characteristics of beasts and there were also creatures with the appearance of beasts. A variety of living organisms were immersed in a mysterious liquid. All of these culture tanks were connected to Lilith's culture tank with thick pipes, and a mysterious liquid flowed into them from Lilith. —The countless number of living organisms inside the culture tanks were all Devils. Hades looked at Lilith, and then looked around at all of the Devils inside their tanks. By the god of the Netherworld's side, a Grim Reaper serving under him quietly appeared. That Grim Reaper made a report to Hades.

<<Verrine [1] and Balberith [2] have defeated Mahabali's team.>>

After listening to the report, Hades laughed.

<<Fafafafa. I see. The Hindu gods have fallen. They are truly such amazing monsters.>>

This report was the result of the recent match that had occurred in the Rating Game World Tournament. The Grim Reaper continued

<<Thanks to Thanatos-sama's commotion, it's now very hard to come by any research information on the artificial production of Super Devils…>>

<<Fafafafa, in the end, it was a technique that did not come to fruition. There is no point in continuing to pursue such uncertainty.>>

As Hades proclaimed so, he approached another Grim Reaper who held research material in his hands, and that Grim Reaper then began to report.

<<Lilith is continuing to produce a hundred thousand Devils, and at this stage, it is possible to assert that the successful subjects are number 14784, number 36402, number 50019…and number 61616.>>

<<Fafafafa…it's because of you [61616].>>

Hades muttered to himself as he looked at Lilith. Hades had discovered Lilith in Rizevim's research facility, and used the [Book of Lucifer] that he had obtained from Apophis to begin experimenting with Lilith. The [Book of Lucifer] which had been hidden away recorded in detail how the first-generation Lucifer and Lilith gave birth to Devils, and even the reason why the mother of Devils had become the current piece of flesh that she was. The first-generation

Lucifer created the first Devils — the pure-blooded Devils who were classified as the ‘first-generation’. As the [Book of Lucifer] didn’t have a detailed record of the Four Great Satans aside from Lucifer and also Mephistopheles, it was not known whether the Devils of that generation were born from Lilith, or if they existed with Lucifer from the very beginning…but to the majority of Devils, Lilith seemed to be their original mother. The [Book of Lucifer] was used by the son of Lucifer, Livan — Rizevim translated it into a modern text, and through modern technology, magic and other techniques, he created this product of the Devils. —In spite of this, Rizevim had only written down the methods, and did not have any results to show for it, nor did he perform any actual experiments on his own mother. It was unclear whether this was the final strand of conscience that the evil Devil retained…. Through the book, it was made clear that Lucifer and Lilith originally produced children through various rituals and ceremonies. The only Devil that was born from both Lucifer and Lilith naturally was — Rizevim. Hades followed this book as he began using Lilith to produce Devils. He prepared a large number of culture tanks, and the various creatures now inside them were the results of this experiment. Rather than allowing Lilith to give birth to Devils in an ordinary way, he used a high power input to overload Lilith into forcefully producing Devils. Only in this way was it possible for high-class Devils and above to be born from the very beginning, and the book mentioned the possibility of this method. In the early stages of experimentation, most of the Devils died upon birth, and there were many failures. Hades didn’t feel bothered by this, and from this, he learned the techniques to successfully give birth to Devils. In order to test the strength of the Devils which were safely born, they were sent to cause havoc in the remote areas of various territories. Although most of the Devils that were sent out had been wiped out by the local warriors or the military, it provided excellent results to

Hades as an experiment to examine the degree to which they would obey his orders. And then, after there were several hundred of these high-output Devils…the number gradually exceeded the thousands, and tens of thousands, and at last, the goal was achieved. — Artificially created Devils which were greater than Maou-class. The Grim Reapers serving under him continued to report on the experiment.

<<The measured rank of Sonneillon [3] and Gressil [4] are above Maou-class — also>>

The figures of a young man and woman appeared on a large screen. They were the pair of young Devils who had previously just defeated Mahabali's team in the Rating Game World Tournament. The Grim Reaper looked at the two of them as he continued to report.

<<The numbers for Verrine and Balberith are extremely unusual…they are able to release an aura that is different from the Devil race.>>

In other words, they were the so-called 'Super Devils'. Indeed, Hades' experiment in using Lilith to artificially create 'Super Devils' had finally succeeded.

<<Among a hundred thousand Devils, there are two who are Maou-class, and two Super Devils…. If we include the number of Ultimate-class Devils as well, then I'd say that this is quite substantial. Though, it was only because of Lilith that we had such a high probability rate.>>

<<If certain conditions are met, then a total of five subjects will eventually turn into Maou-class beings after birth.>>

<<Hmm. As far as the data is concerned, Sonneillon and Gressil may also turn into Super Devils if the conditions are correct.>>

Under high load, they had produced over a hundred thousand Devils in a short period of time. There were only four ideal successful subjects—. Coupled with those who could potentially evolve later on, nine had currently been prepared. With those four in particular, Lilith had sent out a signal. After analysing it, the signals were found to be names. Hades used the signals to give the Maou-class (strong) subjects the names of Sonneillon and Gressil. As for the Super Devils, the female was named Verrine, while the male was named Balberith. Hades looked at the man — Balberith's image.

<<…Number 61616 Balberith. A monster exceeding all specifications. I never imagined that someone potentially capable of challenging a Dragon God single-handedly would be born…>>

When Balberith was born, even Hades felt a cold chill. The inexplicable, and incomprehensibly tremendous aura which seemed to have no limit radiated out of that Devil's body. He was clearly an out of the ordinary existence. Hades sent Sonneillon, Gressil, Verrine, and Balberith to a helper (the [King] according to the rules) to participate in the Rating Game World Tournament. The result was — the defeat of the Asura gods' prince, Mahabali's team. The Asura gods who were skilled in combat even amongst god-class beings had been defeated, so it was an incredible achievement. On the other hand, the existence of the extraordinary beings known as 'Super Devils' among Devils once again made Hades shudder.

<<Can Lilith still continue production right now?>>

Hades asked his subordinate.

<<No, the limit will be reached very soon. If this damaged state continues to deteriorate, then it will die and disappear.>>

Lilith's flesh had already begun to deteriorate when she was discovered, and necrosis had already begun at the edges. The first-generation Lucifer must have forced an unreasonable onto to his own wife, causing her to turn into this piece of flesh. To add onto that, Hades had abused her even further. Hades laughed

<<After all, it was already damaged all over when we discovered it. Fafafafa, it seems like the first-generation Lucifer also terrorised his own wife to so that he could pick out the first Devils.>>

The first-generation Lucifer must have only selected strong Devils, and they were the ones who became the first generation of Devils. But the present was already different from the past — the [God of the Bible] and Lucifer were already dead. After that, the birth of those belonging to the Maou-class and [Super Devils] continued to increase. The existence of Devils like this might have been influenced by the death of the original Lucifer and the [God of the Bible], causing this trend to emerge. Hades thought so to himself. In order to change the topic, Hades asked his subordinates.

<<Are there any movements from Orcus and the others?>>

<<Orcus-sama wishes to maintain neutrality. The second-generation Pluto-sama has also remained neutral.>>

That was a trend with some of the executives. Even if Hades left the Netherworld, that was unlikely to change. Even if it was just a discussion of the situation, it was only natural that some would begin to harbour doubts.

<<Pluto's successor is more familiar with Orcus than me, so that is understandable.>>

Hades was well aware of everything that Orcus and the others were up to. There wouldn't be a problem even if they became his enemy. When that time came, they could simply go to war. At that moment, a Grim Reaper arrived to bring in an urgent report.

<<Hades-sama. —Tartarus-sama, along with Erebus-sama and Nyx-sama will soon arrive at the meeting place.>>

Upon hearing this report, the expressions of all of the Grim Reapers present immediately changed, and they seemed to become elated.

<<—What! Oh, even Tartarus, one of the primordial gods agrees!?>>

<<Likewise also primordial gods, the God of Darkness Erebus-sama and the Goddess of the Night Nyx are also making a move!?>>

Tartarus—. One of the primordial gods in the Greek mythology, whose name meant 'hell' itself. Hades had invited him over. The God of Darkness Erebus and the Goddess of the Night Nyx were also primordial gods of Greek mythology, the sibling gods responsible for darkness. They had also given birth to numerous other gods who watched over death, and even Thanatos was born from Erebus and Nyx, thus those two gods were considered to be powerful existences.

<<I've also received word from Tartarus-sama that he has summoned Angra Mainyu-sama over.>>

The uproar intensified even further. Some Grim Reapers continued to tremble without rest.

<<…The greatest evil spirit of Zoroastrianism…!>>

<<The source of the evil that gave rise to the Evil Dragon Aži Dahāka…!>>

Hades simply — let out a muffled laugh.

<<That is how it should be. —There will always exist gods who feel pain because of the peace that [DxD] protects.>>

Therefore, as a precursor, the Evil God Loki lit the smoke signal for a rebellion last year. It was a premature rebellion though…there were many gods who sympathised with Loki. However, there was more than just good news to report.

<<There is also another report. It is said that it was extremely difficult to contact Hel-sama of the Norse mythology, and Great King Enma-sama who is associated with Hindu mythology.>>

Hel of the Norse mythology was in charge of Niflheim, and she was also the daughter of the Evil God Loki. She had been put under strict surveillance due to her father's previous actions. Even in the past, Hel seemed to oppose Odin and [DxD], so the various factions were becoming even stricter with her surveillance. As for the Great King Enma and Śakra — or Indra, they belonged to both Buddhism and Hindu mythology. They were gods who held a certain influence on both sides…among the gods who ruled over the afterlife, they were very strict gods, so cooperation would have been unlikely in the first place. Hades didn't seem to care too much as he calmly said

<<They are simply the kinds of existences who do not wish to ride this great wave. Just having Tartarus as one of the primordial gods and Angra Mainyuu is already more than enough.>>

Their combat strength was sufficient. The meeting location would immediately be set up, and they would prepare to talk. However, because of the actions of Tartarus and the others, it was possible that a primordial god would respond to the Sekiryuutei — the Oppai Dragon. Hades was also concerned about the primordial god who was responsible for sex and love — contact between Eros and Hyoudou Issei. But that was only a small impediment, and by counting in Balberith, victory could almost be guaranteed. Hades glanced at the large displays, and a group of people appeared on them. They were the VIPs of all of the factions that made up the anti-terrorist [DxD] team. Hades glared at Hyoudou Issei's portrait as he said

<<That's right. The ultimate goal is the chief god of each mythology. —And then, all of the Longinus possessors. The Maou Beelzebub will also be eliminated.>>

With those words, all of the Grim Reapers present responded to their master.

<<<<<<<<<<<<<Yes!>>>>>>>>>>>>>

This was all in order to fight against the organisation that had been born from various different factions — [DxD]. Gods who ruled over evil, darkness, and death. —They would never be able to understand. That was because the peace that they sought could not coexist with the other—.

[1] Alternate reading is 'number 36402'.
[2] Alternate reading is 'number 61616'.
[3] Alternate reading is 'number 14784'. Known as the demon who tempts men to hatred.

[4] Alternate reading is ‘number 50019’. Known as the demon who tempts men with impurity.

SECRET TALKS

Ajuka Beelzebub was alone in his own research facility, and he was engaged in a conversation with the VIPs who were in the Isolation Barrier Field. Whilst fighting against Trihexa, Azazel said

[Well, will the matter proceed almost as it has been planned?]

It was possible to see various auras, magic and techniques flying around chaotically within the Isolation Barrier Field. Trihexa's body also showed up in a corner of the display occasionally. It was in the midst of such a battle that Ajuka nodded and answered Azazel's question.

"That's correct, if the first-generation Bael is allowed to continue interfering in these internal affairs, then the Underworld will have no future to speak of. The agenda that we are discussing in this form — is the proposal to name the Two Heavenly Dragons of this generation, Hyoudou Issei-kun and Vali Lucifer as successors to the next generation of Maous, but the politicians who have raised objections to this are those associated with the first-generation Bael."

The next generation would adopt the [Seven Great Maou System]—. Aside from Beelzebub, the Seven Great Maou would include Lucifer, Leviathan, Asmodeus, Belial, Belphegor and Mammon. They had already begun nominating candidates internally. Among them, voices for Vali Lucifer, who had inherited the blood of the true Lucifer as the third-generation descendant to become the candidate for 'Lucifer' were the strongest. Although the subject had yet to be mentioned to the person in question, the conditions were

already in place. When Vali himself promised to commit, then the decision could be considered a done deal. To the side, Sirzechs in his destruction form also said

[What are the minimum conditions for Ise-kun and Vali Lucifer that need to be in place, Ajuka?]

“Yeah, at the least, they must become one of the top four in this Tournament. That way, the first-generation Bael and even the nobles who are currently lobbying won’t be able to object.”

[Will they reach that with certainty?]

“It’s not impossible. But it will be hard. —After all, the main knockout tournament will consist entirely of Maou-class or god-class beings. Simply entering the knockouts will involve a fight against these existences. Moreover, the gods colluding with Hades are also taking action behind the scenes.”

According to reports, the god of the Netherworld, Hades, was currently in Cocytus. At the same time, various factions had been attacked by mysterious Devils. Through an investigation, all of them had unknown identities, but information on their bodies and demonic energy showed that they were all very similar to the ancient Devils. After many interrogations, they only received answers such as ‘I was ordered to attack that place’, and even when their minds were read, no relevant memories could be found, making the situation extremely tricky. On the contrary, they were still riddled with mysteries after so many investigations, which showed that they had to have some kind of connection to a larger entity, making it obvious that it had something to do with Hades’ presence in Cocytus. Although they tried to interrogate the captured Thanatos…he had yet to awaken from the influence of Hyoudou Issei’s mysterious

power, so nothing could be extracted from him. Investigations into the Naberius House's branch family and the Nebiros House who performed research on artificially creating Super Devils had also yet to begin. Although these shadows of unease were looming, Azazel exposed a smile.

[Well, the so-called Heavenly Dragons will be the ones to kick away those gods. And those two kids also have the help of the strongest invincible Dragon God-sama and assistance from the Longinus possessors. If they're not able to overcome these difficulties, then there would have been no meaning in us coming to this side.]

The former governor of the Fallen Angels seemed to hold absolute faith in the students that he had taught. This was only natural. In the span of one short year, they had defeated most of the hostile forces of various mythologies such as the Old Maou Faction, the Evil God Loki, the Hero Faction, and Qlippoth. His faith in them could not be shaken. But, Azazel took a slight backpedal and said with a slightly disturbed tone

[Leaving Vali aside for now, Ise is…. Among the seven seats, is there one that suits him?]

Just as Azazel said, it was not a hereditary system, rather, positions were inherited according to their respective duties. For example, Lucifer needed to have exceptional leadership and had to show authority. Each of the different Maous had different responsibilities.

The [Seven Great Maou System] could be likened to the seven deadly sins…just as Azazel said, it was very difficult to find a position that fit Hyoudou Issei upon thought. Azazel continued

[…Asmodeus represents lust, right? As Falbium's successor, in terms of the image…]

From afar, the voice of Falbium Asmodeus was heard.

[I think that will be good…it'll be fine so long as strategy coordination is delegated to another Maou. There's no other problems right, Ajuka? Also, I'm not lustful at all.]

After releasing an enormous sphere of destruction, Sirzechs casually said

[Better yet, isn't it fine just to make an eight seat directly? How about a special position just for him? He's already long been a hero of the Underworld and he will be remembered in history even thousands of years later. Since that's the case, is there any problem with setting up a new seat? Having seven or eight is the same anyway.]

This unexpected and yet simple opinion left Ajuka stunned. Azazel couldn't help but burst out in laughter.

[Hahaha! Sirzechs! How could you say that? Sure, seven and eight aren't too different! But the meaning of the seven deadly sins will be completely gone! No, I dare say that the eighth deadly sin would be 'Oppai Dragon'! Ddraig is going to cry again when he hears that!]

Beside him, Serafall and Falbium also laughed

[Ufufu ☆, Sirzechs-chan has always said nonsensical stuff like this ever since the past. But, he unexpectedly became quite a success ♩]

Indeed, before Sirzechs became a Maou, he would always put forward such unexpected and unconstrained opinions, causing everyone to become speechless or laugh out loud. Even when

Sirzechs didn't act as a Maou, and returned to his private life, this was the case. Ajuka quietly laughed and he asked Sirzechs in return

"Fufufu, if we go by your proposal, then what do we do? What kind of position will we prepare for him?"

Sirzechs swiftly replied

[—Satan. It's a name that has the meaning of a Maou. In the apocalypse, it's also recorded that the terms of Satan and dragon were synonymous. Doesn't it suit him well?]

"Is that really okay? It'll seems like it'll coincide with your [Crimson Satan] name."

[Ajuka, when I am liberated from this place, I will return to being a simple Devil — Sirzechs Gremory. That's why the name of Satan should be handed over to the next generation. And if it's him, then he'll definitely…]

After Sirzechs released an enormous blast of destructive demonic energy and carved off a large chunk of Trihexa's flesh, he said

[—He'll become the [Crimson Satan [1]]. I couldn't be any happier about my brother-in-law inheriting that name.]

Trihexa began to regenerate again, and so Sirzechs and the others continued to attack. His voice was trembling. He surely felt joy at the fact that a younger person could inherit his will.

"…I'll make sure that I tell him and your little sister those words of yours."

After hearing Ajuka say that, Sirzechs became even happier.

[I want to see my nephews and nieces as soon as possible. I'm sure there'll be a lot of them when I return.]

And then, Azazel smiled as he answered

[Hahaha! I think you'll see lots of children with different mothers! Perhaps even Serafall's little sister will have children.]

However, Serafall stopped smiling as soon as she heard Azazel's words, and she expressionlessly shook her head.

[No. That is impossible, Azazel-chan. That is absolutely impossible. Absolutely not allowed.]

Serafall spoke in a low and serious voice. To her, the future of her precious little sister was more important than anything else.

[If someone is to become the husband of my Sona-chan, then they'll have to pass my groom training course, they have to be stronger than me, and they have to be capable of defeating Sirzechs-chan. I won't concede on that at all.]

Sirzechs couldn't help but flinch a bit after listening to Serafall's words.

[…S-So I'm going to be the opponent for Sona's groom candidates…. No, since it's the request of my good friend, I don't have any reason to refuse….]

In response to this, Azazel bitterly smiled.

[To find a guy like that, isn't that basically impossible…? The future of the Sitri clan looks pretty bleak….]

Seeing as they were able to fight and speak about the future of their families at the same time, it appeared as though these

comrades had already gotten used to fighting against Trihexa. It looked like Trihexa would be defeated even earlier than expected. Azazel and the Maous fought whilst chatting cheerfully, and the former chief god of the Norse mythology Odin, as well as the former chief god of the Greek Mythology Zeus approached them. Odin waved Gungnir around whilst asking Azazel

[What's this? Both the Oppai Dragon and the Butt Dragon Emperor are going to become Maous?]

[For the time being, it'll be decided after we see the fight involving your kids and Zeus' children.]

Zeus then released a fierce shower of lightning onto Trihexa and heartily laughed

[Gahahahaha! Apollon huh! He's pretty strong!]

Odin rubbed his cheek as he said

[My Vidar huh…mmm, he's a troublesome guy, but he does have strength fitting for a chief god. Before I came here, I told him that he definitely had to go and find a wife….]

Speaking of which, just as Odin said, there was news from Asgard — Ajuka had heard about Vidar's marriage interview…. Ajuka smiled as he said to Odin and Zeus

"Odin-sama, Zeus-sama, your successors will soon compete against the Sekiryuutei. Let us wait and see the battle of the next generation."

—It wouldn't be the Seven Great Maou, but the Eight Great Maou who would succeed them—. The desire for Hyoudou Issei to be crowned as the eighth one was an unexpectedly interesting idea, and

Ajuka smiled to himself about it. Having said that, neither one of those two had been asked about their own intentions yet. Would they accept it? That was also a problem—. If possible, it was Ajuka's intention to appoint the powerful new Maous in order to deal with the unknown enemies who would come to attack in thirty years, as well as the creation of the new organisation [ExE]. And then, Ajuka Beelzebub took out the cat-shaped hair ornament that Rias Gremory had given him. The research data on 'artificially creating Super Devils' conducted by the Naberius House's branch family and the person of the Nebiros House had been hidden on it…. The two young Devils with power on the level of Super Devils who suddenly emerged at the Tournament would soon be involved in a full-scale investigation from here on—-.

AFTERWORD

Long time no see. This is Ishibumi Ichiei. We've finally reached the twenty fourth volume. First of all, I must apologise to everyone. In volume twenty three and DX4, I said that 'the next volume will include the battle between Rias' team and Vali's team, as well as Ise's team against the [Leisure of the Kings] team', but only the battle between Rias' team and Vali's team has been shown this time. I gave that notice because according to the original plan, these two important games would be written together, whilst the background of the game would include the stories of Koneko and Kuroka, as well as the Grim Reapers of the Netherworld. Taking into account my energy, work schedule, and page count, I felt that it was too difficult to include all of that into a single volume, so I decided to split it apart into this twenty fourth volume, and the upcoming twenty fifth volume. Because they're now separate, the page count has increased. It would have been a major challenge if I tried to follow the original plan. Furthermore, because they've been separated, the number of volumes in this final arc has become more than originally anticipated. From here on, please allow me to provide a commentary on the twenty fourth volume.

Koneko (Shirone) and Kuroka becoming brides!In this volume, it was Koneko and Kuroka's turn, and I told the story of these sisters' past. Before, I didn't go into detail about their parents because they already had something important. In order to face this new family, their past is detailed to Ise and the readers, while their own problems have been resolved and concluded through a showdown between the sisters. Although Koneko has become Shirone…both of her names will still be used from now on. After all, including the

short story collections, I've already written more than twenty seven books using Koneko. I feel that there is a possibility of mistakes in the future, so I've decided that it should be fine to use both. …Well, I think if readers find 'Koneko' confusing, then they can make the judgement on which will be better. Please give some love to the two new brides.

Release of new breast techniques!This time, Ise has gained two breast techniques all at once. [Nyuutron Beam Cannon] and [Pai Phone]. 'It was clearly a wave cannon, so why is it a beam?' Perhaps readers might feel a bit puzzled, but purely for the sake of the language's fluidity, please ignore this small problem. You'll get lost if you try to look at Ise's breast techniques in too much detail. This brand new breast technique has allowed Ise to single-handedly defeat one of the strongest among the ultimate-class Grim Reapers. In the process of this, Ise's grandfather has also appeared. Well, he's an old man who's just as perverted as Ise, so he has a clearer understanding of Ise's potential than anyone else. At last, Ise's name has begun to resound even in the Buddhist world. I wonder what kind of Buddhist deities will appear next. I can't guess either.

Vasco Strada and Crom Cruach, Rias' combination technique, and the new enemies!This time there were many strong characters. His Eminence Strada having reverted back to his prime overpowered various members of Vali's team. The Maouified Vali faced Crom as an opponent, while Fenrir (only has eighty percent of its original strength this time) fought against Rias + Gasper who had a great boost in power in a short span of time. I really just wrote whatever I felt was best. It was a lot of fun to write about His Eminence Strada again this time. As one of the strongest characters at the beginning of this work, it is only natural that he should have such strength. The nature of his character would rather pursue spirituality than a

youthful body. Crom was also one of the strongest characters since the beginning. Aside from the Dragon Gods, he is only the dragon so far who is able to fight seriously against Ise and Vali. Hence he and a Maouified Vali were able to have a splendid battle. Regarding Rias' increase in power, just as she said, this is one of the results that she has attained after witnessing the successive strengthening of her comrades. By cladding Gasper on her body, her power can increase several-fold. This terrifying form appears when Rias' power of destruction and Gasper's Balor power are used in conjunction, but because the drain on stamina and demonic energy is unusually high, she became exhausted at the end. Rias has gained a tremendous power-up from this, and so her future battles will certainly heat up. Finally, the appearance of the two mysterious Super Devils! Balberith and Verrine are brand new enemies who have appeared because this is the final arc. Please stay tuned to the future volumes of DxD to find out what kind of entanglements they will have with our protagonist in the future.

An advertisement.

When this book is published, I think the airing of the new television anime series of High School DxD, [High School DxD HERO] will have already begun. Thank you to all the fans for your concern and patience in waiting for so long. The PV has already been released I think, and this PV shows the fight against Sairaorg. Cao Cao also makes his appearance at the end of the PV. In order words, the fourth season will include the battles against the two of these people. Both of them are popular rivals, and for the fans looking forward to their battles, you will surely see many more heated battles. The new staff have been announced: the director Matsuda, the screenwriter Konuta-san, and the main character designer Makoto-san. A strong team has been gathered for the production. All

of the new staff and the production studio Passione are extremely cautious in handling original work, and I'm truly thankful for their attention to all of the small details. I also participated in almost all of the script meetings and setting meetings, and it is very detailed and faithful to the original work. As the author, I cannot thank everyone enough. I think it will be broadcast next year, so I hope the fans of this original work will look forward to it.

Another advertisement.

Sharing the same universe with High School DxD, and as previously mentioned, <<Dog God of the Fallen — SLASHDØG—>> and volume twenty four are available for sale at the same time. Characters from <<SLASHDØG>> also make an appearance in volume twenty four and there is a bit of crossover. If you are interested, please have a read of <<SLASHDØG>>. I will just say here that the oppai there do not lose to those of DxD! The possessor of the Longinus [Absolute Demise] Lavinia takes on the role of Vali's older sister. Rather than romantic love, it's more of a familial love. I'll feel satisfied if readers enjoy the other side of Vali.

Next are my acknowledgements. Miyama-Zero-sama, Editor T-sama, thank you for your hard work!

Well, next is the twenty fifth volume that follows this. The game that couldn't be shown in volume twenty four, the battle against the [Leisure of the Kings] team will be illustrated in volume twenty five. Even though Ise and the others have received equipment to boost their strength this time, their opponents will be the strongest line-up that they have encountered to date. How will Ise and the others fight against Vidar's group? Please look forward to the twenty fifth volume. The next volume will feature Rossweisse. It was mentioned that Rossweisse would be going to a marriage interview, so what

kind of developments will occur between Ise and Rossweisse as they progress through this event? Please wait and see! Next time, it will also be released together with the second volume of <<Dog God of the Fallen — SLASHDØG—>>. That volume will feature Lavinia, so if you felt interested in her in volume twenty four and you want to pursue Lavinia's oppai, please also support her there! Well then, let us meet again in DxD volume twenty five and <<SLASHDØG>> volume two which are scheduled to be released around next spring!